CROWDED OUT O'CROFIELD

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

W. a. D.

The Sorrel Mare was tugging hard at the Rein. *Page 66.*

CROWDED OUT O' CROFIELD

OR

THE BOY WHO MADE HIS WAY

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

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CROWDED OUT O' CROFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLACKSMITH'S BOY.

"I'm going to the city!"

He stood in the wide door of the blacksmith-shop, with his hands in his pockets, looking down the street, toward the rickety old bridge over the Cocahutchie. He was a sandy-haired, freckled-faced boy, and if he was really only about fifteen, he was tall for his age. Across the top of the door, over his head, stretched a cracked and faded sign, with a horse-shoe painted on one end and a hammer on the other, and the name "John Ogden," almost faded out, between them.

The blacksmith-shop was a great, rusty, grimy clutter of work-benches, vises, tools, iron in bars and rods, and all sorts of old iron scraps and things that looked as if they needed making over.

The forge was in the middle, on one side, and near it was hitched a horse, pawing the ground with a hoof that bore a new shoe. On the anvil was a brilliant, yellow-red loop of iron, that was not quite yet a new shoe, and it was sending

out bright sparks as a hammer fell upon it—"thud, thud, thud," and a clatter. Over the anvil leaned a tall, muscular, dark-haired, grimy man. His face wore a disturbed and anxious look, and it was covered with charcoal dust. There was altogether too much charcoal along the high bridge of his Roman nose and over his jutting eyebrows.

The boy in the door also had some charcoal on his cheeks and forehead, but none upon his nose. His nose was not precisely like the blacksmith's. It was high and Roman half-way down, but just there was a little dent, and the rest of the nose was straight. His complexion, excepting the freckles and charcoal, was chiefly sunburn, down to the neck-band of his blue checked shirt. He was a tough, wiry-looking boy, and there was a kind of smiling, self-confident expression in his blue-gray eyes and around his firm mouth.

"I'm going to the city!" he said, again, in a low but positive voice. "I'll get there, somehow."

Just then a short, thick-set man came hurrying past him into the shop. He was probably the whitest man going into that or any other shop, and he spoke out at once, very fast, but with a voice that sounded as if it came through a bag of meal.

"Ogden," said he, "got him shod? If you have, I'll take him. What do you say about that trade?"

"I don't want any more room than there is here," said the blacksmith, "and I don't care to move my shop."

"There's nigh onto two acres, mebbe more, all along the creek from below the mill to Deacon Hawkins's line, below

the bridge," wheezed the mealy, floury, dusty man, rapidly. "I'll get two hundred for it some day, ground or no ground. Best place for a shop."

"This lot suits me," said the smith, hammering away. "'Twouldn't pay me to move—not in these times."

The miller had more to say, while he unhitched his horse, but he led him out without getting any more favorable reply about the trade.

"Come and blow, Jack," said the smith, and the boy in the door turned promptly to take the handle of the bellows.

The little heap of charcoal and coke in the forge brightened and sent up fiery tongues, as the great leathern lungs wheezed and sighed, and Jack himself began to puff.

"I've got to have a bigger man than you are, for a blower and striker," said the smith. "He's coming Monday morning. It's time you were doing something, Jack."

"Why, father," said Jack, as he ceased pulling on the bellows, and the shoe came out of the fire, "I've been doing something ever since I was twelve. Been working here since May, and lots o' times before that. Learned the trade, too."

"You can make a nail, but you can't make a shoe," said his father, as he sizzed the bit of bent iron in the water-tub and then threw it on the ground. "Seven. That's all the shoes I'll make this morning, and there are seven of you at home. Your mother can't spare Molly, but you'll have to do something. It is Saturday, and you can go fishing, after dinner, if you'd like to. There's nothin' to ketch 'round here, either. Worst times there ever were in Crofield."

There was gloom as well as charcoal on the face of the blacksmith, but Jack's expression was only respectfully serious as he walked away, without speaking, and again stood in the door for a moment.

"I could catch something in the city. I know I could," he said, to himself. "How on earth shall I get there?"

The bridge, at the lower end of the sloping side-street on which the shop stood, was long and high. It was made to fit the road and was a number of sizes too large for the stream of water rippling under it. The side-street climbed about twenty rods the other way into what was evidently the Main Street of Crofield. There was a tavern on one corner, and across the street from that there was a drug store and in it was the post-office. On the two opposite corners were shops, and all along Main Street were all sorts of business establishments, sandwiched in among the dwellings.

It was not yet noon, but Crofield had a sleepy look, as if all its work for the whole week were done. Even the horses of the farmers' teams, hitched in front of the stores, looked sleepy. Jack Ogden took his longest look, this time, at a neat, white-painted frame-house across the way.

"Seems to me there isn't nearly so much room in it as there used to be," he said to himself. "It's just packed and crowded. I'm going!"

He turned and walked on up toward Main Street, as if that were the best thing he could do till dinner time. Not many minutes later, a girl plainly but neatly dressed came slowly along in front of the village green, away up Main Street.

She was tall and slender, and her hair and eyes were as dark as those of John Ogden, the blacksmith. Her nose was like his, too, except that it was finer and not so high, and she wore very much the same anxious, discontented look upon her face. She was walking slowly, because she saw, coming toward her, a portly lady, with hair so flaxy that no gray would show in it. She was elegantly dressed. She stopped and smiled and looked very condescending.

"Good-morning, Mary Ogden," she said.

"Good-morning, Miss Glidden," said Mary, the anxious look in her eyes changing to a gleam that made them seem very wide awake.

"It's a fine morning, Mary Ogden, but so very warm. Is your mother well?"

"Very well, thank you," said Mary.

"And is your aunt well—and your father, and all the children? I'm so glad they are well. Elder Holloway's to be here to-morrow. Hope you'll all come. I shall be there myself. You've had my class a number of times. Much obliged to you. I'll be there to-morrow. You must hear the Elder. He's to inspect the Sunday-school."

"Your class, Miss Glidden?" began Mary; and her face suggested that somebody was blowing upon a kind of fire inside her cheeks, and that they would be very red in a minute.

"Yes; don't fail to be there to-morrow, Mary. The choir'll be full, of course. I shall be there myself."

"I hope you will, Miss Glidden—"

The portly lady saw something up the street at that moment.

"Oh my! What is it? Dear me! It's coming! Run! We'll all be killed! Oh my!"

She had turned quite around, while she was speaking, and was once more looking up the street; but the dark-haired girl had neither flinched nor wavered. She had only sent a curious, inquiring glance in the direction of the shouts and the rattle and the cloud of dust that were coming swiftly toward them.

"A runaway team," she said, quietly. "Nobody's in the wagon."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Miss Glidden; but Mary began to move away, looking not at her but at the runaway, and she did not hear the rest. "Mary Ogden's too uppish.—Somebody'll be killed, I know they will!—She's got to be taken down.—There they come!—Dressed too well for a blacksmith's daughter. Doesn't know her place.—Oh dear! I'm so frightened!"

Perhaps she had been wise in getting behind the nearest tree. It was a young maple, two inches through, lately set out, but it might have stopped a pair of very small horses. Those in the road were large—almost too large to run well. They were well-matched grays, and they came thundering along in a way that was really fine to behold; heads down, necks arched, nostrils wide, reins flying, the wagon behind them banging and swerving—no wonder everybody stood still and, except Mary Ogden, shouted, "Stop 'em!" One

young fellow, across the street, stood still only until the runaways were all but close by him. Then he darted out into the street, not ahead of them but behind them. No man on earth could have stopped those horses by standing in front of them. They could have charged through a regiment. Their heavy, furious gallop was fast, too, and the boy who was now following them, must have been as light of foot as a young deer.

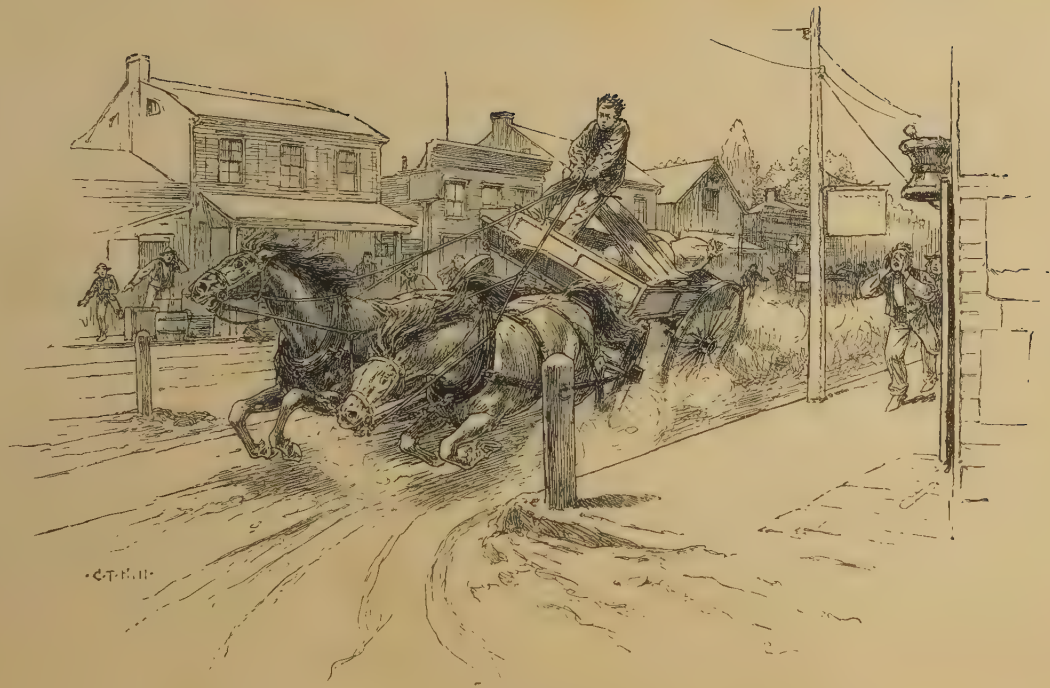
"Hurrah! Hurrah! Go it, Jack! Catch 'em! Bully for you!" arose from a score of people along the sidewalk, as he bounded forward.

"It's Jack! Oh dear me! But it's just like him! There! He's in!" exclaimed Mary Ogden, her dark eyes dancing proudly.

"Why, it's that good-for-nothing brother of Mary Ogden. He's the blacksmith's boy. I'm afraid he will be hurt," remarked Miss Glidden, kindly and benevolently; but all the rest shouted "Hurrah!" again.

Fierce was the strain upon the young runner, for a moment, and then his hands were on the back-board of the bouncing wagon. A tug, a spring, a swerve of the wagon, and Jack Ogden was in it, and in a second more the loosely flying reins were in his hands.

The strong arms of his father, were they twice as strong, could not at once have pulled in those horses, and one man on the sidewalk seemed to be entirely correct when he said, "He's a plucky little fellow, but he can't do a thing, now he's there."



The Runaway.

His sister was trembling all over, but she was repeating: "He did it splendidly! He can do anything!"

Jack, in the wagon, was thinking only: "I know 'em. They're old Hammond's team. They'll try to go home to the mill. They'll smash everything, if I don't look out!"

It is something, even to a greatly frightened horse, to feel a hand on the rein. The team intended to turn out of Main Street, at the corner, and they made the turn, but they did not crash the wagon to pieces against the corner post, because of the desperate guiding that was done by Jack. The wagon swung around without upsetting. It tilted fearfully, and the nigh wheel was in the air for a moment, until Jack's weight helped bring it down again. There was a short, sharp scream across the street, when the wagon swung and the wheel went up.

Down the slope toward the bridge thundered the galloping team, and the blacksmith ran out of his shop to see it pass.

"Turn them into the creek, Jack!" he shouted, but there was no time for any answer.

"They'd smash through the bridge," thought Jack. "I know what I'm about."

There were wheel-marks down from the street, at the left of the bridge, where many a team had descended to drink the water of the Cocahutchie, but it required all Jack's strength on one rein to make his runaways take that direction. They had thought of going toward the mill, but they knew the watering-place.

Not many rods below the bridge stood a clump of half a dozen gigantic trees, remnants of the old forest which had been replaced by the streets of Crofield and the farms around it. Jack's pull on the left rein was obeyed only too well, and it looked, for some seconds, as if the plunging beasts were about to wind up their maddened dash by a wreck among those gnarled trunks and projecting roots. Jack drew his breath hard, and there was almost a chill at his young heart, but he held hard and said nothing.

Forward—one plunge more—hard on the right rein—

"That was close!" he said. "If we didn't go right between the big maple and the cherry! Now I've got 'em!"

Splash, crash, rattle! Spattering and plunging, but cooling fast, the gray team galloped along the shallow bed of the Cocahutchie.

"I wish the old swimming-hole was deeper," said Jack, "but the water's very low. Whoa, boys! Whoa, there! Almost up to the hub—over the hub! Whoa, now!"

And the gray team ceased its plunging and stood still in water three feet deep.

"I mustn't let 'em drink too much," said Jack; "but a little won't hurt 'em."

The horses were trembling all over, but one after the other they put their noses into the water, and then raised their heads to prick their ears back and forth and look round.

"Don't bring 'em ashore till they're quiet, Jack," called out the deep, ringing voice of his father from the bank.

There he stood, and other men were coming on the run. The tall blacksmith's black eyes were flashing with pride over the daring feat his son had performed.

"I daren't tell him, though," he said to himself. "He's set up enough a'ready. He thinks he can do 'most anything."

"Jack," wheezed a mealy voice at his side, "that's my team—"

"I know it," said Jack. "They 're all right now. Pretty close shave through the trees, that was!"

"I owe ye fifty dollars for a-savin' them and the wagin," said the miller. "It's wuth it, and I'll pay it; but I've got to owe it to ye, jest now. Times are awful hard in Crofield. If I'd ha' lost them hosses and that wagin—"

He stopped short, as if he could not exactly say how disastrous it would have been for him.

There was a running fire of praise and of questions poured at Jack, by the gathering knot of people on the shore, and it was several minutes before his father spoke again.

"They're cool now," he said. "Turn 'em, Jack, and walk 'em out by the bridge, and up to the mill. Then come home to dinner."

Jack pretended not to see quite a different kind of group gathered under the clump of tall trees. Not a voice had come to him from that group of lookers-on, and yet the fact that they were there made him tingle all over.

Two large, freckle-faced, sandy-haired women were hugging each other, and wiping their eyes; and a very small

girl was tugging at their dresses and crying, while a pair of girls of from twelve to fourteen, close by them, seemed very much inclined to dance. Two small boys, who at first belonged to the party, had quickly rolled up their trousers and waded out as far as they could into the Cocahutchie. Just in front of the group, under the trees, stood Mary Ogden, straight as an arrow, her dark eyes flashing and her cheeks glowing while she looked silently at the boy on the wagon in the stream, until she saw him wheel the grays. Even then she did not say anything, but turned and walked away. It was as if she had so much to say that she felt she could not say it.

"Aunt Melinda! Mother!" said one of the girls, "Jack isn't hurt a mite. They'd all ha' been drowned, though, if there was water enough."

"Hush, Bessie," said one of the large women, and the other at once echoed, "Hush, Bessie."

They were very nearly alike, these women, and they both had long straight noses, such as Jack's would have been, if half-way down it had not been Roman, like his father's.

"Mary Ann," said the first woman, "we mustn't say too much to him about it. He can only just be held in, now."

"Hush, Melinda," said Jack's mother. "I thought I'd seen the last of him when the gray critters came a-powderin' down the road past the house"—and then she wiped her eyes again, and so did Aunt Melinda, and they both stooped down at the same moment, saying, "Jack's safe, Sally," and picked up the small girl, who was crying, and kissed her.

The gray team was surrendered to its owner as soon as it reached the road at the foot of the bridge, and again Jack was loudly praised by the miller. The rest of the Ogden family seemed to be disposed to keep away, but the tall blacksmith himself was there.

"Jack," said he, as they turned away homeward, "you can go fishing this afternoon, just as I said. I was thinking of your doing something else afterward, but you've done about enough for one day."

He had more to say, concerning what would have happened to the miller's horses, and the number of pieces the wagon would have been knocked into, but for the manner in which the whole team had been saved.

When they reached the house the front door was open, but nobody was to be seen. Bob and Jim, the two small boys, had not yet returned from seeing the gray span taken to the mill, and the women and girls had gone through to the kitchen.

"Jack," said his father, as they went in, "old Hammond 'll owe you that fifty dollars long enough. He never really pays anything."

"Course he doesn't—not if he can help it," said Jack. "I worked for him three months, and you know we had to take it out in feed. I learned the mill trade, though, and that was something."

Just then he was suddenly embarrassed. Mrs. Ogden had gone through the house and out at the back door, and Aunt Melinda had followed her, and so had the girls. Molly had

suddenly gone up-stairs to her own room. Aunt Melinda had taken everything off the kitchen stove and put everything back again, and here now was Mrs. Ogden back again, hugging her son.

"Jack," she said, "don't you ever, ever, do such a thing again. You might ha' been knocked into slivers!"

Molly had gone up the back stairs only to come down the front way, and she was now a little behind them.

"Mother!" she exclaimed, as if her pent-up admiration for her brother was exploding, "you ought to have seen him jump in, and you ought to have seen that wagon go around the corner!"

"Jack," broke in the half-choked voice of Aunt Melinda from the kitchen doorway, "come and eat something. I felt as if I knew you were killed, sure. If you haven't earned your dinner, nobody has."

"Why, I know how to drive," said Jack. "I wasn't afraid of 'em after I got hold of the reins."

He seemed even in a hurry to get through his dinner, and some minutes later he was out in the garden, digging for bait. The rest of the family remained at the table longer than usual, especially Bob and Jim; but, for some reason known to herself, Mary did not say a word about her meeting with Miss Glidden. Perhaps the miller's gray team had run away with all her interest in that, but she did not even tell how carefully Miss Glidden had inquired after the family.

"There goes Jack," she said at last, and they all turned to look.

He did not say anything as he passed the kitchen door, but he had his long cane fishing-pole over his shoulder. It had a line wound around it, ready for use. He went out of the gate and down the road toward the bridge, and gave only a glance across at the shop.

"I didn't get many worms," he said to himself, at the bridge, "but I can dig some more if the fish bite. Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't."

Over the bridge he went, and up a wagon track on the opposite bank, but he paused for one moment, in the very middle of the bridge, to look up stream.

"There's just enough water to run the mill," he said. "There isn't any coming over the dam. The pond's even full, though, and it may be a good day for fish. I wish I was in the city!"

CHAPTER II.

THE FISH WERE THERE.

ALL Saturday afternoon was before Jack Ogden, when he came out at the water's edge, near the dam, across from the mill. That was there, big and red and rusty-looking; and the dam was there; and above them was the mill-pond, spreading out over a number of acres, and ornamented with stumps, old logs, pond-lilies, and weeds. It was a fairly good pond, the best that Cocahutchie Creek could do for Crofield, but Jack's face fell a little as he looked at it.

"There are more fellows than fish here," he said to himself, with an air of disgust.

There was a boy at the end of the dam near him, and a boy in the middle of it, and two boys at the flume, near the mill. There were three punts out on the water, and one of them had in it a man and two boys, while the second boat held but one man, and the third contained four. A big

stump near the north shore supported a boy, and the old snag jutting out from the south shore held a boy and a man.

There they all were, sitting perfectly still, until, one after another, each rod and line came up to have its hook and bait examined, to see whether or not there had really been a bite.

"I'm fairly crowded out," remarked Jack. "Those fellows have all the good places. I'll have to go somewhere else; where'll I go?"

He studied that problem for a full minute, while every fisherman there turned to look at him, and then turned back to watch his line.

"I guess I'll try down stream," said Jack. "Nobody ever caught anything down there, and nobody ever goes there, but I s'pose I might as well try it, just for once."

He turned away along the track over which he had come. He did not pause at the road and bridge, but went on down the further bank of the Cocahutchie. It was a pretty stream of water, and it spread out wide and shallow, and rippled merrily among stones and bowlders and clumps of willow and alder for nearly half a mile. Gradually, then, it grew narrower, quieter, deeper, and wore a sleepy look which made it seem more in keeping with quiet old Crofield.

"The hay's about ready to cut," said Jack, as he plodded along the path, near the water's edge, through a thriving meadow of clover and timothy. "There's always plenty

of work in haying time. Hullo! What grasshoppers! Jingo!"

As he made the last exclamation, he clapped his hand upon his trousers pocket.

"If I didn't forget to go in and get my sinker! Never did such a thing before in all my life. What's the use of trying to fish without a sinker?"

The luck seemed to be going directly against him. Even the Cocahutchie, at his left, had dwindled to a mere crack between bushes and high grass, as if to show that it had no room to let for fish to live in—that is, for fish accustomed to having plenty of room, such as they could find when living in a mill-pond, lined around the edges with boys and fish-poles.

"That's a whopper!" suddenly exclaimed Jack, with a quick snatch at something that alighted upon his left arm. "I've caught him! Grasshoppers are the best kind of bait, too. I'll try him on, sinker or no sinker. Hope there are some fish, down here."

The line he unwound from his rod was somewhat coarse, but it was strong, and so was his hook, as if the fishing around Crofield called for stout tackle as well as for a large number of sportsmen. The big, long-limbed, green-coated jumper was placed in position on the hook, and then, with several more grumbling regrets over the absence of any sinker, Jack searched along the bank for a place whence he could throw his bait into the water.

"This'll do," he said, at last, and the breeze helped him

to swing out his line until the grasshopper at the end of it dropped lightly and naturally into a dark little eddy, almost across that narrow ribbon of the Cocahutchie.

Splash—tug—splash again—

"Jingo! What's that? I declare—if he isn't pulling! He'll break the line—no, he won't. See that pole bend! Steady—here he comes. Hurrah!"

Out he came, indeed, for the rude, strong tackle held, even against the game struggling of that vigorous trout. There he lay now, on the grass, with Jack Ogden bending over him in a fever of exultation and amazement.

"I never could have caught him with a worm and a sinker," he said, aloud. "This is the way to catch 'em. Isn't he a big fellow! I'll try some more grasshoppers."

There was not likely to be another two-pound brook-trout very near the hole out of which that one had been pulled. There would not have been any at all, perhaps, but for the prevailing superstition that there were no fish there. Everybody knew that there were bullheads, suckers, perch, and "pumpkin-seeds" in the mill-pond, and eels, with now and then a pickerel, but the trout were a profound secret. It was easy to catch another big grasshopper, but the young sportsman knew very well that he knew nothing at all of that kind of fishing. He had made his first cast perfectly, because it was about the only way in which it could have been made, and now he was so very nervous and excited and cautious that he did very well again, aided as before by the breeze. Not in the same place, but at a little distance down,

and close to where Jack captured his second bait, there was a crook in the Cocahutchie, with a steep, overhanging, bushy bank. Into the glassy shadow under that bank the sinkerless line carried and dropped its little green prisoner, and there was a hungry fellow in there, waiting for foolish grasshoppers in the meadow to spring too far and come down upon the water instead of upon the grass. As the grasshopper alighted on the water, there was a rush, a plunge, a strong hard pull, and then Jack Ogden said to himself:

"I've heard how they do it. They wait and tire 'em out. I won't be in too much of a hurry. He'll get away if I am."

That is probably what the fish would have done, for he was a fish with what army men call "tactics." He was able to pull very hard, and he was also wise enough to rush in under the bank and to sulkily stay there.

"Feels as if I'd hooked a snag," said Jack. "May be I've lost the fish and he's hitched me into a 'cod-lamper' eel of some kind. Steady—no, I mustn't pull harder than the fish."

He was breathless, but not with any exertion that he was making. His hat fell off upon the grass, as he leaned forward through the alder bushes, and his sandy hair was tangled for a moment in some stubby twigs. He loosened his head, still holding firmly his bent and straining rod. One step farther, a slip of his left foot, an unsuccessful grasp at a bush, and then Jack went over and down into a pool deeper than he had thought the Cocahutchie afforded so near Crofield.

There was a very fine splash, as the grasshopper fly-fisherman went under, and there was a coughing and spluttering a moment afterward, when his eager, excited, anxious face came up again. He could swim extremely well, and he was not thinking of his ducking—only of his game.

"I hope I haven't lost him!" he exclaimed, as he tried to pull upon the line.

It did not tug at all, just then, for the fish on the hook had been rudely startled out from under the bank and was on his way up the Cocahutchie, with the hook in his mouth.

"There he is! I've got him yet! Glad I can swim—" cried Jack; and it did seem as if he and this fish were very well matched, except that Jack had to give one of his hands to the rod while his captive could use every fin.

Down stream floated Jack, passing the rod back through his hands until he could grasp the line, and all the while the fish was darting madly about to get away.

"There, I've touched bottom. Now for him! Here he comes. I'll draw him ashore easy—that's it! Hurrah! biggest fish ever was caught in the Cocahutchie!"

That might or might not be so, but Jack Ogden had a three-pound trout, flopping angrily upon the grass at his feet.

"I know how to do it now," he almost shouted. "I can catch 'em! I won't let anybody else know how it's done, either."

He had learned something, no doubt, but he had not learned how to make a large fish out of a small one. All the rest of that afternoon he caught grasshoppers and cast

them daintily into what seemed to be good places, but he did not have another occasion to tumble in. When at last he was tired out and decided to go home, he had a dozen more of trout, not one of them weighing over six ounces, with a pair of very good yellow perch, one very large perch, a sucker, and three bullheads, that bit when his bait happened to sink to the bottom without any lead to help it. Take it all in all, it was a great string of fish to be caught on a Saturday afternoon, when all that the Crofield sportsmen around the mill-pond could show was six bullheads, a dozen small perch, a lot of "pumpkin-seeds" not much larger than dollars, five small eels, and a very vicious snapping-turtle.

Jack stood for a moment looking down at the results of his experiment in fly-fishing. He felt, really, as if he could not more than half believe it.

"Fishing doesn't pay," he said. "It doesn't pay cash, any way. There isn't anything around Crofield that does pay. Well, it must be time for me to go home."

CHAPTER III.

I AM ONLY A GIRL.

Jack was dry enough, but anybody could see that he had had a ducking, when he marched down the main street. He was carrying his prizes in two strings, one in each hand, and he was looking and feeling taller than he ever felt before. It was just the right hour to meet people, and he had to answer curious questions from some women, and from twice as many men, and from three times as many boys, all the way from above the green, where he came out into the street, down to the front of the Washington Hotel.

"Yes; I caught 'em all in the Cocahutchie."

He had had to say that any number of times, and he had also explained, apparently without trying to conceal anything:

"I had to swim for 'em. Caught 'em all under water. Those big speckled fellows are trout. They pulled me clean under. All that kind of fish live under water." And he told half a dozen inquiring boys: "I've found the best fish-hole you ever saw. Deep water all 'round it. I'm going there again." And then every one asked: "Take me with you, Jack?"

He had to come to a halt at the tavern, for every man in the arm-chairs on the piazza brought his feet down from the railing.

"Hold on! I want to look at those fish!" shouted old Livermore, the landlord. "Where'd you catch 'em?"

"Down the Cocahutchie," said Jack once more. "I caught 'em under water."

"Those are just what I'm looking for," replied Livermore, rubbing his sides, while nearly a dozen men crowded around to admire, and to guess at the weights.

"Traout's a-sellin' at a dollar a paound, over to Mertonville," squealed old Deacon Hawkins; "and traout o' that size is wuth more'n small traout. Don't ye let old Livermore cheat ye, Jack."

"I won't cheat him, Deacon," said the big landlord. "I don't want anything but the trout. There's a Sunday crowd coming over from Mertonville, to-morrer, to hear Elder Holloway. I'll give ye two dollars, Jack."

"That's enough for one fish," said Jack. "Don't you want the big one? I had to dive for him. He'll weigh more'n three pounds."

"No, he won't!" said the landlord, becoming more and more eager. "Say three dollars for the lot."

"I daon't know but what I want some o' them traout myself," began Deacon Hawkins, peering more closely at the largest prize. "It's hard times,—and a dollar a paound. I've got some folks comin' and Elder Holloway's to be at my haouse. I don't know but I oughter—"

"I'll take 'em, Jack," interrupted the landlord, testily. "I spoke first. Three pounds, and two is five pounds, and—"

"I'll give another dollar for the small traout," exclaimed Deacon Hawkins. "He can't have 'em all."

The landlord might have hesitated even then, but the excitement was catching, and Squire Jones was actually, but slowly, taking out his pocket-book.

"Five! There's your five, Jack. The big fish are mine. Take your money. Fetch 'em in," broke out old Livermore.

"There's my dollar,—and there's my traout,—" squealed the deacon.

"I was just a-goin' to saay—" at that moment growled the deep, heavy bass voice of Squire Jones.

"Too late," said the landlord. "He's taken my money. Come in, Jack. Come in and get yours, Deacon," and Jack walked on into the Washington House with six dollars in his hand, just as a boy he knew stuck his head under Squire Jones's arm and shouted:

"Jack!—Jack! Why didn't yer put 'em up at auction?"

It took but a minute to get rid of the very fine fish he had sold, and then the uncommonly successful angler made his way out of the Washington Hotel through the side door.

"I don't intend to answer any more questions," he said to himself; "and all that crowd is out there yet."

There was another reason that he did not give, for his perch, good as they were, and the wide-mouthed sucker, and the great, clumsy bullheads, looked mean and common, now

that their elegant companions were gone. He felt almost ashamed of them until just as he reached the back yard of his own home.

A tall, grimy man, with his head under the pump, was vigorously scrubbing charcoal and iron dust from his face and hands and hair. "Jack," he shouted, "where'd you get that string o' fish? Best I've seen round here for ever so long."

Another voice came from the kitchen door, and in half a second it seemed to belong to a chorus of voices.

"Why, Jack Ogden! What a string of fish!"

"I caught 'em 'way down the Cocahutchie, Mother," said Jack. "I caught 'em all under water. Had to go right in after some of 'em."

"I should say you did," growled his father, almost jocosely, and then he and Mrs. Ogden and Aunt Melinda and the children crowded around to examine the fish, on the pump platform.

"Jack must do something better'n that," said his father, rubbing his face hard with the kitchen towel; "but he's had the best kind o' luck this time."

"He caught a team of runaway horses this morning, too," said Mary, looking proudly at the fish. "I wish I could do something worth talking about, but I'm only a girl."

Jack's clothes had not suffered much from their ducking, mainly because the checked shirt and linen trousers, of which his suit consisted, had been frequently soaked before.

His straw hat was dry, for it had been lying on the grass when he went into the water, and so were his shoes and stockings, which had been under the bed in his bedroom, waiting for Sunday.

It was not until the family was gathered at the table that Jack came out with the whole tremendous story of his afternoon's sport, and of its cash results.

"Now I've learned all about fly-fishing," he said, with confidence, "I can catch fish anywhere. I sha'n't have to go to fish out of that old mill-pond again."

"Six dollars!" exclaimed his mother, from behind the tea-pot. "What awful extravagance there is in this wicked world! But what'll you do with six dollars?"

"It's high time he began to earn something," said the tall blacksmith, gloomily. "It's hard times in Crofield. There's almost nothing for him to do here."

"That's why I'm going somewhere else," said Jack, with a sudden burst of energy, and showing a very red face. "Now I've got some money to pay my way, I'm going to New York."

"No, you're not," said his father, and then there was a silence for a moment.

"What on earth could you do in New York?" said his mother, staring at him as if he had said something dreadful. She was not a small woman, but she had an air of trying to be larger, and her face quickly began to recover its ordinary smile of self-confident hope, so much like that of Jack. She added, before anybody else could speak: "There are thou-

sands and thousands of folks there already. Well—I suppose you could get along there, if they can."

"It's too full," said her husband. "It's fuller'n Crofield. He couldn't do anything in a city. Besides, it isn't any use; he couldn't get there, or anywhere near there, on six dollars."

"If he only could go somewhere, and do something, and be somebody," said Mary, staring hard at her plate.

She had echoed Jack's thought, perfectly. "That's you, Molly," he said, "and I'm going to do it, too."

"You're going to work a-haying, all next week, I guess," said his father, "if there's anybody wants ye. All the money you earn you can give to your mother. You ain't going a-fishing again, right away. Nobody ever caught the same fish twice."

Slowly, glumly, but promptly, Jack handed over his two greenbacks to his mother, but he only remarked:

"If I work for anybody 'round here, they'll want me to take my pay in hay. They won't pay cash."

"Hay's just as good," said his father; and then he changed the subject and told his wife how the miller had again urged him to trade for the strip of land along the creek, above and below the bridge. "It comes right up to the line of my lot," he said, "and to Hawkins's fence. The whole of it isn't worth as much as mine is, but I don't see what he wants to trade for."

She agreed with him, and so did Aunt Melinda; but Jack and Mary finished their suppers and went out to the

front door. She stood still for a moment, with her hands clasped behind her, looking across the street, as if she were reading the sign on the shop. The discontented, despondent expression on her face made her more and more like a very young and pretty copy of her father.

"I don't care, Molly," said Jack. "If they take away every cent I get, I'm going to the city, some time."

"I'd go, too, if I were a boy," she said. "I've got to stay at home and wash dishes and sweep. You can go right out and make your fortune. I've read of lots of boys that went away from home and worked their way up. Some of 'em got to be Presidents."

"Some girls amount to something, too," said Jack. "You've been through the Academy. I had to stop, when I was twelve, and go to work in a store. Been in every store in Crofield. They didn't pay me a cent in cash, but I learned the grocery business, and the dry-goods business, and all about crockery. That was something. I could keep a store. Some of the stores in New York 'd hold all the stores in Crofield."

"Some of 'em are owned and run by women, too," said Mary; "but there's no use of my thinking of any such thing."

Before he could tell her what he thought about it, her mother called her in, and then he, too, stood still and seemed to study the sign over the door of the blacksmith-shop.

"I'll do it!" he exclaimed at last, shaking his fist at the

sign. "It isn't the end of July yet, and I'm going to get to the city before Christmas; you see 'f I don't."

After Mary Ogden left him and went in, Jack walked down to the bridge. It seemed as if the Cocahutchie had a special attraction for him, now that he knew what might be in it.

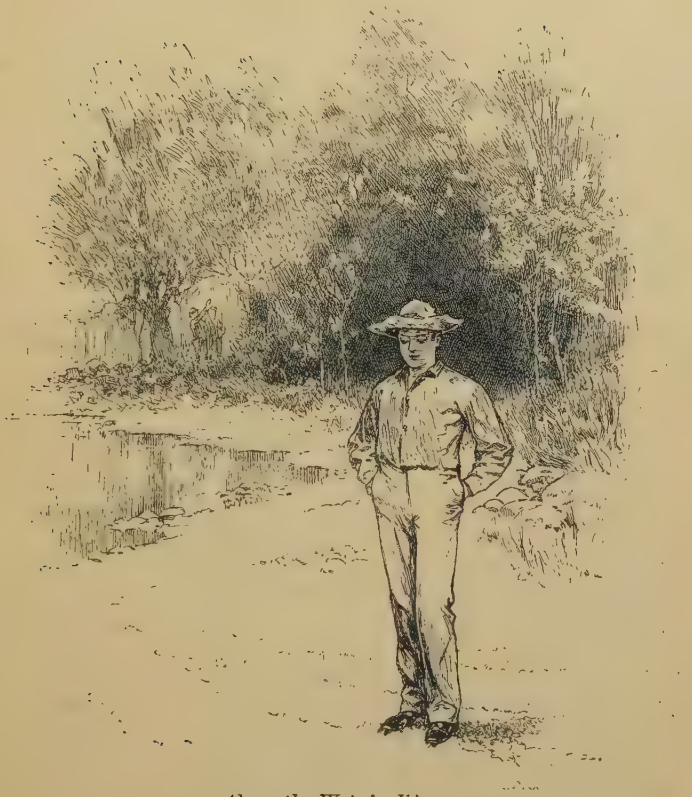
There were three boys leaning over the rail on the lower side of the bridge, and four on the upper side, and all were fishing. Jack did not know, and they did not tell him, that all their hooks were baited with "flies" of one kind or another instead of worms. Two had grasshoppers, and one had a big bumblebee, and they were after such trout as Jack Ogden had caught and been paid so much money for. One told another that Jack had five dollars apiece for those fish, and that even the bullheads were so heavy it tired him to carry them home.

Jack did not go upon the bridge. He strolled down along the water's edge.

"It's all sand and gravel," he said; "but I'd hate to leave it."

It was curious, but not until that very moment had he been at all aware of any real affection for Crofield. He was only dimly aware of it then, and he forgot it all to answer a hail from two men under the clump of giant trees which had so nearly wrecked the miller's wagon.

The men had been looking up at the trees, and Jack heard part of what they said about them, as he came near. They had called him to talk about his trout-fish-



Along the Water's Edge.

ing, but they had aroused his curiosity upon another subject.

"Mr. Bannerman," he said, as soon as he had an opportunity between "fish" questions, "did you say you'd give a hundred dollars for those trees, just as they stand? What are they good for?"

"Jack," exclaimed the sharp-looking man he spoke to, "don't you tell anybody I said that. You won't, will you? Come, now, didn't I treat you well while you were in my shop?"

"Yes, you did," said Jack, "but you kept me there only four months. What are those trees good for? You don't use anything but pine."

"Why, Jack," said Bannerman, "it isn't for carpenter work. Three of 'em are curly maples, and that one there's the straightest-grained, biggest, cleanest old cherry! They're for j'iner-work, Jack. But you said you wouldn't tell?"

"I won't tell," said Jack. "Old Hammond owns 'em. I stayed in your shop just long enough to learn the carpenter's trade. I didn't learn j'iner-work. Don't you want me again?"

"Not just now, Jack; but Sam and I've got a bargain coming with Hammond, and he owes us some, now, and you mustn't put in and spile the trade for us. I'll do ye a good turn, some day. Don't you tell."

Jack promised again and the carpenters walked away, leaving him looking up at the trees and thinking how it would seem to see them topple over and come crashing down into the Cocahutchie, to be made up into chairs and tables. Just as long as he could remember anything he had seen the old trees standing guard there, summer and winter, leafy or bare, and they were like old friends to him.

"I'll go home," he said, at last. "There hasn't been a house built in Crofield for years and years. It isn't any

kind of place for carpentering, or for anything else that I know how to do."

Then he took a long, silent, thoughtful look up stream, and another down stream, and instead of the gravel and bushes and grass, in one direction, and the rickety bridge and the slippery dam and the dingy old red mill, in the other direction, he seemed to see a vision of great buildings and streets and crowds of busy men, while the swishing ripple of the Cocahutchie changed into the rush and roar of the great city he was setting his heart upon. He gave it up for that evening, and went home and went to bed, but even then it seemed to him as if he were about to let go of something and take hold of something else.

"I've done that often enough," he said to himself. "I'll have to leave the blacksmith's trade now, but I'm kind o' glad I learned it. I'm glad I didn't have my shoes on when I went into the water, though. Soaking isn't good for that kind of shoes. Don't I know? I've worked in every shoe-shop in Crofield, some. Didn't get any pay, except in shoes; but then I learned the trade, and that's something. I never had an opportunity to stay long in any one place, but I could stay in the city."

Then another kind of dreaming set in, and the next thing he knew it was Sunday morning, with a promise of a sunny, sultry, sleepy kind of day.

It was not easy for the Ogden family to shut out all talk about fishing, while they were eating Jack's fish for breakfast, but they avoided the subject until Jack went to dress.

Jack was quite another boy by the time he was ready for church. He was skillful with the shoe-brush, and from his shoes upward he was a surprise.

"You do look well," said Mary, as he and she were on their way to church. "But how you did look when you came home last night!"

There was little opportunity for conversation, for the walk before the Ogden family from their gate to the church-door was not long.

The little processions toward the village green did not divide fairly after reaching there that morning. The larger part of each aimed itself at the middle of the green, although the building there was no larger than either of the two that stood at its right and left.

"Everybody's coming to hear Elder Holloway," said Jack. "They say it takes a fellow a good while to learn how to preach."

Mrs. Ogden and Aunt Melinda led their part of the procession, and Jack and his father followed them in. There were ten Ogdens, and the family pew held six. Just as they were going in, some one asked Mary to go into the choir. Little Sally nestled in her mother's lap; Bob and Jim were small and thin and only counted for one; Bessie and Sue went in, and so did their father, and then Jack remarked:

"I'm crowded out, father. I'll find a place, somewhere."

"There isn't any," said the blacksmith. "Every place is full."

He shook his head until the points of his Sunday collar scratched him, but off went Jack, and that was the last that was seen of him until they were all at home again.

Mary Ogden had her reasons for not expecting to sing in the choir that day, but she went when sent for. The gallery was what Jack called a "coop," and would hold just eighteen persons, squeezed in. Usually it was only half full, but on a great day, what was called the "old choir" was sure to turn out. There were no girls nor boys in the "old choir." There had been three seats yet to fill when Mary was sent for, but Miss Glidden and Miss Roberts and her elder sister from Mertonville came in just then. So, when Mary reached the gallery, Miss Glidden leaned over, smiled, and said very benevolently:

"You will not be needed to-day, Mary Ogden. The choir is filled."

The organ began to play at that moment, somewhat as if it had lost its temper. Mr. Simmons, the choir-leader (whenever he could get there), flushed and seemed about to say something. He was the one who had sent for Mary, and it was said that he had been heard to say that it would be good to have "some music, outside of the organ." Before he could speak, however, Mary was downstairs again. Seats were offered her in several of the back pews, and she took one under the gallery. She might as well have had a sounding-board behind her, arranged so as to send her voice right at the pulpit. Perhaps her temper was a little aroused, and she did not know how very full her voice was when she be-

gan the first hymn. All were singing, and they could hear the organ and the choir, but through, over, and above them all sounded the clear, ringing notes of Mary Ogden's soprano. Elder Holloway, sitting in the pulpit, put up a hand to one ear, as half-deaf men do, and sat up straight, looking as if he was hearing some good news. He said afterward that it helped him preach; but then Mary did not know it. When all the services were over, she slipped out into the vestibule to wait for the rest. She stood there when Miss Glidden came downstairs. The portly lady was trying her best to smile and look sweet.

"Splendid sermon, Mary Odgen," said she. "I hope you'll profit by it. I sha'n't ask you to take my class this afternoon. Elder Holloway's going to inspect the school. I'll be glad to have you present, though, as one of my best scholars."

Mary went home as quickly as she could, and the first remark she made was to Aunt Melinda.

"*Her* class!" she said. "Why she hasn't been there in six weeks. She had only four in it when she left, and there's a dozen now."

The Ogden procession homeward had been longer than when it went to church. Jack understood the matter the moment he came into the dining-room, for both extra leaves had been put into the extension-table.

"There's company," he said aloud. "You couldn't stretch that table any farther, unless you stretched the room."

"Jack," said his mother, "you must come afterward. You can help Mary wait on the table."

Jack was as hungry as a young pickerel, but there was no help for it, and he tried to reply cheerfully:

"I'm getting used to being crowded out. I can stand it."

"Where'd you sit in church?" asked his mother.

"Out on the stoop," said Jack, "but I didn't go till after I'd sat in five pews inside."

"Sorry you missed the sermon," said his mother. "It was about Jerusalem."

"I heard him," said Jack; "you could hear him halfway across the green. It kept me thinking about the city, all the while. I'm going, somehow."

Just then the talk was interrupted by the others, who came in from the parlor.

"I declare, Ogden," said the editor, "we shall quite fill your table. I'm glad I came, though. I'll print a full report of it all in the Mertonville *Eagle*."

"That's Murdoch, the editor," said Jack to himself. "That's his paper. Ours was a *Standard*,—but it's bu'sted."

"There's no room for a newspaper in Crofield," said the blacksmith. "They tried one, and it lasted six months, and my son worked on it all the time it ran."

Mr. Murdoch turned and looked inquisitively at Jack through a huge pair of tortoise-shell-rimmed glasses.

"That's so," said Jack; "I learned to set type and helped edit the paper. Molly and I did all the clipping and most of the writing, one week."

"Did you?" said the editor emphatically. "Then you did well. I remember there was one strong number."

"Molly," said Jack, as soon as they were out in the kitchen, "there's five besides our family. They won't leave a thing for us."

"There's hardly enough for them, even," said Mary. "What'll we do?"

"We can cook!" said Jack, with energy. "We'll cook while they're eating. You know how, and so do I."

"You can wait on table as well as I can," said Mary.

There was something cronyish and also self-helpful, in the way Jack and Molly boiled eggs and toasted bread and fried bacon and made coffee, and took swift turns at eating and at waiting on the table.

The editor of the *Eagle* heard the whole of the trout item, and about the runaway, and told Jack to send him the next big trout he caught.

There was another item of news that was soon to be ready for Mr. Murdoch. Jack was conscious of a restless, excited state of mind, and Mary said things that made him worse.

"You want to get somewhere else as badly as I do," he remarked, just as they came back from taking in the pies to the dinner-table.

"I feel, sometimes, as if I could fly!" exclaimed Mary. Jack walked out through the hall to the front door, and stood there thinking, with a hard-boiled egg in one hand and a piece of toast in the other.

The street he looked into was silent and deserted, from the bridge to the hotel corner. He looked down to the creek, for a moment, and then he looked the other way.

"I believe Molly could do 'most anything I could do," he said to himself; "unless it was catching a runaway team. She couldn't ha' caught that wagon. Hullo, what's that? Jingo! The hotel cook must have made a regular bonfire to fry my trout!"

He wheeled as he spoke, and dashed back through the house, shouting:

"Father, the Washington Hotel's on fire!—over the kitchen!"

"Ladder, Jack. Rope. Bucket," cried the tall blacksmith, coolly rising from the table, and following. As for the rest, beginning with the editor of the *Eagle*, it was almost as if they had been told that they were themselves on fire. Even Aunt Melinda exclaimed: "He ought to have told us more about it! Where is it? How'd it ever catch? Oh, dear me! It's the oldest part of the hotel. It's as dry as a bone, and it'll burn like tinder!"

Everybody else was saying something as all jumped and ran, but Jack and his father were silent. Ladder, rope, water-pails, were caught up, as if they were going to work in the shop, but the moment they were in the street again it seemed as if John Ogden's lungs must be as deep as the bellows of his forge.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" His full, resonant voice sent out the sudden warning.

Fighting the Fire.

"Fire! Fire! Fire!" shouted Jack, and every child of the Ogden family, except Mary, echoed with such voice as belonged to each.

Through the wide gate of the hotel barn-yard dashed the

blacksmith and his son, with their ladder, at the moment when Mrs. Livermore came out at the kitchen door, wiping a plate. All the other inmates of the hotel were gathered around the long table in the dining-hall, and they were too busy with pie and different kinds of pudding, to notice anything outdoors.

"Where is the fire, Mr. Ogden?" she said, in a fatigued tone.

"The fire's on your roof, close to the chimney," said the blacksmith. "May be we can put it out, if we're quick about it. Call everybody to hand up water."

Up went a pair of hands, and out came a great scream. Another shrill scream and another, followed in quick succession, and the plate she had held, fell and was shivered into fragments on the stone door-step.

"Foi-re! Foi-re! Foi-re-re-re!" yelled the hotel cook. "The house is a-bur-rnin'! Wa-ter! Waw-aw-ter!"

The doors to passage-ways of the hotel were open, and in a second more her cry was taken up by voices that sent the substance of it ringing through the dining-hall.

Plates fell from the hands of waiters, coffee-cups were upset, chairs were overturned, all manner of voices caught up the alarm.

It would have been a very serious matter but for the promptness of Jack Ogden and his very cool father. The ladder was planted and climbed, there was a quick dash along the low but high-ridged roof of the kitchen addition of the hotel,—the rope was put around Jack's waist, and

then he was able safely to use both hands in pouring water from the pails around the foot of the chimney. Other feet came fast to the foot of the ladder. More went tramping into the rooms under the roof. The pumps in the kitchen and in the barn-yard were worked with frantic energy; pail after pail was carried upstairs and up the ladder; water was thrown in all directions; nothing was left undone that could be done, and a great many things were done that seemed hardly possible.

"Hot work, Jack," said his father. "It's a-gaining on us. Glad they'd all about got through dinner,—though Livermore tells me he's insured."

"I can stand it," said Jack. "They have steam fire-engines in the city, though. Oh, but wouldn't I like to see one at work, once. I'd like to be a fireman!"

"That's about what you are, just now," said his father, and then he turned toward the ladder and shouted:

"Hurry up that water! Quick, now! Bring an axe! I want to smash the roof in. Bear it, Jack. We've got to beat this fire."

The main building of the Washington Hotel was long, rather than high, with an open veranda along Main Street. The third story was mainly steep roof and dormer-windows, and the kitchen addition had only a story and a half. It was an easy building to get into or out of. Very quickly, after the cry of "Fire!" was heard, the only people in it, upstairs, were such of the guests as had the pluck to go and pack their trunks. The lower floor was very well crowded,

and it was almost a relief to the men actually at work as firemen that so many other men kept well back because they were in their "Sunday-go-to-meeting" clothes.

Everybody was inclined to praise Jack Ogden and his father, who were making so brave a fight on the roof within only a few feet of the smoke and blaze. It was heroic to look a burning house straight in the face and conquer it. During fully half an hour there seemed to be doubt about the victory, but the pails of water came up rapidly, a line of men and boys along the roof conveyed them to the hands of Jack, and the fire had a damp time of it, with no wind to help. The blacksmith had chopped a hole in the roof, and Tom and Sam Bannerman, the carpenters, were already calculating what they would charge old Livermore to put the addition in order again.

"There, Jack," said his father, at last, "we can quit, now. The fire's under. Somebody else can take a turn. It's the hottest kind of work. Come along. We've done our share, and a little more, too."

Jack had just swallowed a puff of smoke, but as soon as he could stop coughing, he said:

"I've had enough. I'm coming."

Other people seemed to agree with them; but there would have been less said about it if little Joe Hawkins had not called out:

"Three cheers for the Ogdens!"

The cheers were given as the two volunteer firemen came down the ladder, but there were no speeches made in reply.

Jack hurried back home at once, but his father had to stop and talk with the Bannermans and old Hammond, the miller.

"Jack," said his mother, looking at him, proudly, from head to foot, "you're always doing something or other. We were looking at you, all the while."

"He hasn't hurt his Sunday clothes a bit," said Aunt Melinda, but there was quite a crowd around the gate, and she did not hug him.

He was a little damp, his face was smoky, his shirt-collar was wilted, and his shoes would require a little work, but otherwise he was none the worse.

Jack went into the house, saying that he must brush his clothes; but, really it was because he wished to get away. He did not care to talk to anybody.

"I never felt so, in all my life, as I did when sitting on that roof, fighting that fire," he said aloud, as he went upstairs; and he did not know, even then, how excited he had been, silent and cool as he had seemed. In that short time, he had dreamed of more cities than he was ever likely to see, and of doing more great things than he could ever possibly do, and when he came down the ladder he felt older than when he went up. He had no idea that much the same thoughts had come to Mary, nor did he know how fully she believed that he could do anything, and that she was as capable as he.

"Father's splendid, too," she said, "but then he never had any chance, here, and Mother didn't either. Jack ought to have a chance."

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN MARY.

Mr. Murdoch had stood on the main street corner, taking notes for the *Eagle*, but now he came back to say the fire was out and it was nearly time for Sunday-school.

It seemed strange to have Sunday-school just after a fire, but the Ogden family and its visitors at once made ready.

It was a quarterly meeting, with general exercises and singing, and a review of the quarter's lessons. The church was full by the hour for opening, and the school had a very prosperous look. Elder Holloway and Mr. Murdoch and two other important men sat in the pulpit, and Joab Spokes, the superintendent, stood in front of them to conduct the exercises. The elder seemed to be glancing benevolently around the room, through his spectacles, but there were some things there which could be seen without glasses, and he must have seen those also.

Miss Glidden looked particularly well and very stately, as she sat in the pew in front of her class (if it were hers), with Mary Ogden. Her first words, on coming in to take command, had been:

"Mary, dear, don't go. I really wish you to stay. You may be of assistance."

Mary flushed a little, but she said nothing in reply. She remained, and she certainly did assist, for the girls looked at her almost all the while, and Miss Glidden had no trouble whatever, and nothing to do but to look pleased and beaming and dignified. The elder, it was noticed, seemed to feel special interest in the part taken in the exercises by the class with two teachers, one for show and one for work. He even seemed to see something comical in the situation, and there was positive admiration in a remark he made to Mr. Murdoch:

"She's a true teacher. There's really only one teacher to that class. She must have been born with a knack for it!"

Elder Holloway, with all his years and experience, had not understood the case of Miss Glidden's class more perfectly than had one young observer at the other end of the church. Jack Ogden could not see so well as those great men in the pulpit, but then he could hear much and surmise the rest.

"All those girls will stand by Molly!" he said to himself. "I hope it won't be long before school's dismissed," he added.

He had reasons for this hope. He was a little late through lingering to take a curious look at what was left of the fire. The street had a littered look. The barns and stables were wide open, and deserted, for the horses had

been led to places of safety. There seemed to be an impression that the hotel was half destroyed; but the damage had not been very great.

A faint, thin film of blue was eddying along the ridge-pole of the kitchen addition. Jack noticed it, but did not know what it meant. A more practiced observer would have known that, hidden from sight, buried in the punk of the dry-rotted timber, was a vicious spark of fire, stealthily eating its way through the punk of the resinous pine.

Jack paid little attention to the tiny smoke-wreath, but he was compelled to pay some attention to the weather. It had been hot from sunrise until noon, and the air had grown heavier since.

"I know what that haze means," said Jack to himself, as he looked toward the Cocahutchie. "There's a thunder-storm coming by and by, and nobody knows just when. I'll be on the lookout for it."

For this reason he was glad that he was compelled to find a seat not far from the door of the church. Twice he went out to look at the sky, and the second time he saw banks of lead-colored clouds forming on the northwestern horizon. Returning he said to several of the boys near the vestibule:

"You've just time to get home, if you don't want a ducking."

Each boy passed along the warning; and when the school stood up to sing the last hymn, even the girls and the older people knew of the coming storm. There was a brief silence

before the first note of the organ, and through that silence nearly everybody could catch the shrill squeak in which little Joe Hawkins tried to speak very low and secretly.

"Deakin Cobb, we want to git aout! We've just time to git home if we don't want a duckin'."

The hymn started raggedly and in a wrong pitch; and just then the great room grew suddenly darker, and there was a low rumble of thunder.

"Mary Ogden!" exclaimed Miss Glidden, "what *are* you doing? They can't go yet!"

Mary was singing as loudly and correctly as usual, but she was out in the aisle, and the girls of that class were promptly obeying the motion of hand and head with which she summoned them to walk out of the church.

Elder Holloway may have been only keeping time when he nodded his head, but he was looking at Miss Glidden's class.

So was Miss Glidden, in a bewildered way, as if she, like little Bo-peep, were losing her sheep. Mary was following a strong and sudden impulse. Nevertheless, by the time that class was out of its pews the next caught the idea, and believed it a prudent thing to do. They followed in good order, singing as they went.

"The girls out first,—then the boys," said Elder Holloway, between two stanzas. "One class at a time. No hurry."

Darker grew the air. Jack, out in front of the church, was watching the blackest cloud he had ever seen, as it came sweeping across the sky.

"Run for Home."

The people walked out calmly enough, but all stopped singing at the door and ran their best.

"Run, Molly! Run for home!" shouted Jack, seeing Mary coming. "It's going to be an awful storm."

Inside the church there was much hesitation, for a moment; but Miss Glidden followed her class without delay, and all the rest followed as fast as they could, and were out in half the usual time. Joe Hawkins heard Jack's words to Molly.

"Run, boys," he echoed. "Cut for home! There's a fearful storm coming!"

He was right. Great drops were already falling now and then, and there was promise of a torrent to follow.

"I don't want to spoil these clothes," said Jack, uneasily. "I need these to wear in the city. The storm isn't here yet, though. I'll wait a minute." He was holding his hat on and looking up at the steeple when he said that. It was a very old, wooden steeple, tall, slender, and somewhat rheumatic, and he knew there must be more wind up so high than there was nearer the ground. "It's swinging!" he said suddenly. "I can see it bend! Glad they're all getting out. There come Elder Holloway and Mr. Murdoch. See the elder run! I hope he won't try to get to Hawkins's. He'd better run for our house."

That was precisely the counsel given the good man by the editor, and the elder said:

"I'd like to go there. I'd like to see that clever girl again. Come, Murdoch; no time to lose!"

The blast was now coming lower, and the gloom was deepening.

Flash—rattle—boom—crash! came a glitter of lightning and a great peal of thunder.

"Here it is!" cried Jack. "If it isn't a dry blast!"

It was something like the first hot breath of a hurricane. To and fro swung the tottering old steeple for a moment, and then there was another crash—a loud, grinding, splintering, roaring crash—as the spire reeled heavily down, lengthwise, through the shattered roof of the meeting-house! Except for Mary Ogden's cleverness, the ruins might have fallen upon the crowded Sunday-school. Jack turned and ran for home. He was a good runner, but he only just escaped the deluge following that thunderbolt.

Jack turned upon reaching the house, and as he looked back he uttered a loud exclamation, and out from the house rushed all the people who were gathered there.

"Jingo!" Jack shouted. "The old hotel's gone, sure, this time!"

The burrowing spark had smoldered slowly along, until it felt the first fanning of the rising gale. In another minute it flared as if under a blowpipe, and soon a fierce sheet of flame came bursting through the roof.

Down poured the rain; but the hottest of that blaze was roofed over, and the fire had its own way with the empty addition.

"We couldn't help if we should try," exclaimed Mr. Ogden.

"I'll put on my old clothes, any way," said Jack. "Nobody knows what's coming."

"I will, too," said his father.

Jack paused a moment, and said, from the foot of the stairs:

"The steeple's down,—right through the meeting-house. It has smashed the whole church!"

The sight of the fire had made him withhold that news for a minute; but now, for another minute, the fire was almost forgotten.

Elder Holloway began to say something in praise of Mary Ogden about her leading out the class, but she darted away.

"Let me get by, Jack," she said. "Let me pass, please. They all would have been killed if they had waited! But I was thinking only of my class and the rain."

She ran up-stairs and Jack followed. Then the elder made a number of improving remarks about discipline and presence of mind, and the natural fitness of some people for doing the right thing in an emergency. He might have said more, but all were drawn to the windows to watch the strife between the fire and the rain.

The fierce wind drove the smoke through the building, compelling the landlord and his wife to escape as best they could, and, for the time being, the victory seemed to be with the fire.

"Seems to me," said the blacksmith, somberly, "as if Crofield was going to pieces. This is the worst storm we

ever had. The meeting-house is gone, and the hotel's going!"

Mary, at her window, was looking out in silence, but her face was bright rather than gloomy. Even if she was "only a girl," she had found an opportunity for once, and she had not proved unequal to it.

CHAPTER V.

JACK OGDEN'S RIDE.

Jack needed only a few minutes to put on the suit he had worn when fishing.

"There, now," he said; "if there's going to be a big flood in the creek I'm going down to see it, rain or no rain. There's no telling how high it'll rise if this pour keeps on long enough. It rattles on the roof like buckshot!"

"That's the end of the old tavern," said Jack to Mary, as he stood in the front room looking out.

He was barefooted, and had come so silently that she was startled.

"Jack!" she exclaimed, turning around, "they might have all been killed when the steeple came down. I heard what Joe Hawkins said, and I led out the class."

"Good for Joe!" said Jack. "We need a new meeting-house, any way. I heard the elder say so. Less steeple, next time, and more church!"

"I'd like to see a real big church," said Mary,—"a city church."

"You'd like to go to the city as much as I would," said Jack.

"Yes, I would," she replied emphatically. "Just you get there and I'll come afterward, if I can. I've been studying twice as hard since I left the academy, but I don't know why."

"I know it," said Jack; "but I've had no time for books."

"Jack! Molly!" the voice of Aunt Melinda came up the stairway. "Are you ever coming down-stairs?"

"What will the elder say to my coming down barefoot?" said Jack; "but I don't want shoes if I'm going out into the mud."

"He won't care at such a time as this," said Mary. "Let's go

It was not yet supper-time, but it was almost dark enough to light the lamps. Jack felt better satisfied about his appearance when he found how dark and shadowy the parlor was; and he felt still better when he saw his father dressed as if he were going over to work at the forge, all but the leather apron.

The elder did not seem disturbed. He and Mr. Murdoch were talking about all sorts of great disasters, and Mary did not know just when she was drawn into the talk, or how she came to acknowledge having read about so many different things all over the world.

"Jack," whispered his mother, at last, "you'll have to go to the barn and gather eggs, or we sha'n't have enough for supper."

"I'll bring the eggs if I don't get drowned before I get back," said Jack; and he found a basket and an umbrella and set out.

He took advantage of a little lull in the rain, and ran to the barn-yard gate.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "Now I'll have to wade. Why it's nearly a foot deep! There'll be the biggest kind of a freshet in the Cocahutchie. Isn't this jolly?"

The rain pattered on the roof as if it had been the head of a drum. If the house was gloomy, the old barn was darker and gloomier. Jack turned over a half-bushel measure and sat down on it.

"I want to think," he said. "I want to get out of this. Seems to me I never felt it so before. I'd as lief live in this barn as stay in Crofield."

He suddenly sprang up and shook off his blues, exclaiming:

"I'll go and see the freshet, anyhow!"

He carried the eggs into the house.

All the time he had been gone, Elder Holloway had been asking Mary very particularly about the Crofield Academy.

"I don't wonder she says what she does about the trustees," remarked Aunt Melinda. "She took the primary room twice, for 'most a month each time, when the teacher was sick, and all the thanks she had was that they didn't like it when they found it out."

The gutter in front of the house had now become a small torrent.

"All the other gutters are just like that," said Jack.

"So are the brooks all over the country, and it all runs into the Cocahutchie!"

"Father," said Jack, after supper, "I'm going down to the creek."

"I wish you would," said his father. "Come back and tell us how it's looking."

"Could a freshet here do any damage?" asked Mr. Murdoch.

"There's a big dam up at Four Corners," said the blacksmith. "If anything should happen there, we'd have trouble here, and you'd have it in Mertonville, too."

Jack heard that as he was going out of the door. He carried an umbrella; but the first thing he noticed was that the force of the rain seemed to have slackened as soon as he was out of doors. It was now more like mist or a warm sleet, as if Crofield were drifting through a cloud.

"The Washington House needs all the rain it can get," said Jack, as he went along; "but half the roof is caved in. I'm glad Livermore's insured."

When Jack reached the creek he felt his heart fairly jump with excitement. The Cocahutchie was no longer a thin ribbon rippling along in a wide stretch of sand and gravel. It was a turbid, swollen, roaring flood, already filling all the space under its bridge; and the clump of old trees was in the water instead of on dry land.

"Hurrah!" shouted Jack. "As high as that already, and the worst is to come!"

He could not see the dam at first, but the gusts of wind

were making openings in the mist, and he soon caught glimpses of a great sheet of foaming brown water.

"I'll go and take a look at the dam," he said; and he ran to the mill.

"It's just level with the dam," he said, after one swift glance. "I never thought of that. I must go and tell old Hammond what's coming."

The miller's house was not far away, and he and his family were at supper when there came a bang at the door. Then it opened and Mrs. Hammond exclaimed:

"Why, John Ogden!"

"I'm out o' breath," said Jack excitedly. "You tell him that the water's 'most up to the lower floor of the mill. If he's got anything there that'd be hurt by getting wet—"

"Goodness, yes!" shouted the miller, getting up from the table, "enough to ruin me. There are sacks of flour, meal, grain,—all sorts of stuff. It must all go up to the second floor. I'll call all the hands."

"But," said his wife, "it's Sunday!"

"Can't help it!" he exclaimed; "the Cocahutchie's coming right up into the mill. Jack, tell every man you see that I want him!"

Off went Jack homeward, but he spoke to half a dozen men on the way. He did not run, but he went quickly enough; and when he reached the house there was something waiting for him.

It was a horse with a blanket strapped on instead of a saddle; and by it stood his father, and near him stood his

mother and Aunt Melinda and Mary, bareheaded, for it was not raining, now.

"Mount, Jack," said the blacksmith quietly. "I've seen the creek. It's only four and a half miles to the Four Corners. Ride fast. See how that dam looks and come back and tell me. Mr. Murdoch will have his buggy ready to start when you get back. See how many logs there are in the saw-mill boom."

"Oh, Jack!" exclaimed Mary, in a low suppressed voice. "I wish that I were you! It's a great day for you!"

He had sprung to the saddle while his father was speaking, and he felt it was out of his power to utter a word in reply. He did not need to speak to the horse, for the moment Mr. Ogden released the bit there was a quick bound forward.

"This horse is ready to go," said Jack to himself, as he felt that motion. "I've seen her before. I wonder what's made her so excited?"

There was no need for wonder. The trim, light-limbed sorrel mare he was riding had been kept in the hotel stables until that day. She had been taken out to a neighboring stable, at the morning alarm of fire, and when the blacksmith went to borrow her he found her laboring under a strong impression that things in Crofield were going wrong. She was therefore inclined to go fast, and all that Jack had to do was to hold her in. The blacksmith's son was at home in the saddle. It was not yet dark, and he knew the road to the Four Corners. It was a muddy road, and there was a

little stream of water along each side of it. Spattered and splashed from head to foot were rider and horse, but the miles vanished rapidly and the Four Corners was reached.

A smaller village than Crofield, further up among the hills, it had a higher dam, a three times larger pond, a bigger grist-mill, and a large saw-mill. That was because there were forests of timbers among the yet higher hills beyond, and Mr. Ogden had been thinking seriously about the logs from those forests.

"I know what father means," said Jack aloud, as he galloped into the village.

There were hardly any people stirring about its one long street; but there was a reason for that and Jack found out what it was when he pulled up near the mill.

"Everybody has come to watch the dam," he exclaimed. "No use asking about the logs, though; there they are."

The crowd was evidently excited, and the air was filled with shouts and answers.

"The boom got unhitched and swung round 'cross the dam," said one eager speaker; "and there's all the logs, now, —hundreds on 'em,—just a-pilin' up and a-heapin' up on the dam; and when that breaks, the dam'll go, mill and all, bridge and all, and the valley below'll be flooded!"

The moon was up, and the clouds which had hidden it were breaking away as Jack looked at the threatening spectacle before him.

The sorrel mare was tugging hard at the rein and

pawing the mud under her feet, while Jack listened to the talk.

"Stand it? No!" he heard a man say. "That dam wasn't built to stand any such crowdin' as that. Hark!"

A groaning, straining, cracking sound came from the barrier behind which the foaming flood was widening and deepening the pond.

"There it goes! It's breaking!"

Jack wheeled the sorrel, as a dull, thunderous report was answered by a great cry from the crowd; and then he dashed away down the homeward road.

"I must get to Crofield before the water does," he said. "Glad the creek's so crooked; it has twice as far to travel as I have."

Not quite, considering how a flood will sweep over a bend instead of following it. Still, Jack and the sorrel had the start, and nearly all the way it was a downhill road.

The Crofield people gathered fast, after the sky cleared, for a rumor went around that there was something wrong with the dam, and that a man had gone to the Four Corners to warn the people there.

All the men that could crowd into the mill had helped Mr. Hammond get his grain up into the second story, but the water was a hand-breadth deep on the lower floor by the time it was done.

There came a moment when all was silent except the roar of the water, and through that silence the thud of hoofs was

heard coming down from Main Street. Then a shrill, excited voice shouted:

"All of you get off that bridge! The Four Corners dam's gone. The boom's broken, and the logs are coming!"

There was a tumult of questioning, as men gathered around the sorrel, and there was a swift clearing of people from the bridge.

"Why, it's shaking now!" said the blacksmith to Mr. Murdoch. "It'll go down with the first log that strikes it. You drive your best home to Mertonville and warn them. You may be just in time."

Away went the editor, carrying with him an extraordinary treasure of news for the next number of his journal. Jack dismounted, and her owner took the sorrel to her stable; she was very muddy but none the worse for the service she had rendered.

The crowd stood waiting for what was sure to come. Miller Hammond was anxiously watching his threatened and already damaged property. Jack came and stood beside him.

"Mr. Hammond," he said, "all the gravel that you were going to sell to father is lying under water."

"More than two acres of it," said the miller. "The water'll run off, though. I'll tell you what I'll do, Jack. I'll sell it for two hundred dollars, considering the flood."

"If father 'll take it, will you count in the fifty you said you owed me?" inquired Jack.

The miller made a wry face for a moment, but then responded, smiling:

"Well! After what you've done to-night, too: saved all there was on the first floor,—yes, I will. Tell him I'll do it."

They all turned suddenly toward the dam. A high ridge of water was sweeping down across the pond. It carried a crest of foam, logs, planks, and rubbish, shining white in the moonlight, and it rolled on toward the mill and the dam as if it had an errand.

Crash — roar — crash—and a plunging sound,—and it seemed as if the Crofield dam had vanished. But it had not. Only a section of its top work, in the middle, had been knocked away by the rushing stroke of those logs.

A frightened shout went up from the spectators, and it had hardly died away before there followed another splintering crash.

"The bridge!" shouted Jack.

The frail supports of the bridge, brittle with age and weather, already straining hard against the furious water, needed only the battering of the first heavy logs from the boom, and down they went.

"Gone!" exclaimed Mr. Ogden. "The hotel's gone, and the meeting-house, and the dam, and the bridge. There won't be anything left of Crofield, at this rate."

"I'm going to get out of it," said Jack.

"I'll never refuse you again," replied his father, with energy. "You may get out any way you can, and take your chances anywhere you please. I won't stand in your way."

The roar of the surging Cocahutchie was the only sound heard for a full minute, and then the miller spoke.

"The mill's safe," he said, with a very long breath of relief; "the breaking of that hole in the dam let the water and logs through, and the pond isn't rising. Hurrah!"

There was a very faint and scattering cheer, and Jack Ogden did not join in it. He had turned suddenly and walked away homeward, along the narrow strip of land that remained between the wide, swollen Cocahutchie and the fence.

At the end of the fence, where he came into his own street, away above where the head of the bridge had been, there was a large gathering. That around the mill had been nearly all of men and boys. Here were women and girls, and the smaller boys, whose mothers and aunts held them and kept them from going nearer the water. Jack found it of no use to say, "Oh, mother, I'm too muddy!" She didn't care how muddy he was, and Aunt Melinda cared even less, apparently. Bessie and Sue had evidently been crying; but Mary had not; and it was her hand on Jack's arm that led him away, up the street, toward their gate.

"Oh, Jack!" she exclaimed, "I'm so proud! Did you ride fast? I'm glad I can ride! I could have done it, too. It was splendid!"

"Molly," said Jack, "I don't mind telling you. The sorrel mare galloped all the way, going and coming, up hill and down; and Molly, I kept wishing and thinking every jump she gave,—wishing I was galloping to New York, instead of to the Four Corners!

"Molly," he added quickly, "father gives it up and says I may go!"

CHAPTER VI.

OUT INTO THE WORLD.

Monday morning came, bright and sunshiny; and it hardly reached Crofield before the people began to get up and look about them.

Jack went down to the river and did not get back very soon. His mind was full of something besides the flood, and he did not linger long at the mill.

But he looked long and hard at all the pieces of land below the mill, down to Deacon Hawkins's line. He knew where that was, although the fence was gone.

"The freshet didn't wash away a foot of it," he said. "I'll tell father what Mr. Hammond said about selling it."

A pair of well-dressed men drove down from Main Street in a buggy and halted near him.

"Brady," said one of these men, "the engineer is right. We can't change the railroad line. We can say to the Crofield people that if they'll give us the right of way through the village we'll build them a new bridge. They'll do it. Right here's the spot for the station."

"Exactly," said the other man, "and the less we say about it the better. Keep mum."

"That's just what I'll do, too," said Jack to himself, as they drove away. "I don't know what they mean, but it'll come out some day."

Jack went home at once, and found the family at breakfast. After breakfast his father went to the shop, and Jack followed him to speak about the land purchase.

When Jack explained the miller's offer, Mr. Ogden went with him to see Mr. Hammond. After a short interview, Mr. Ogden and Jack secured the land in settlement of the amount already promised Jack, and of an old debt owed by the miller to the blacksmith, and also in consideration of their consenting to a previous sale of the trees for cash to the Bannermans, who had made their offer that morning. Mr. Hammond seemed very glad to make the sale upon these terms, as he was in need of ready money.

When Jack returned to his father's shop, he remembered the men he had seen at the river, and he told his father what they had said.

"Station?—right of way?" exclaimed Mr. Ogden. "That's the new railroad through Mertonville. They'll use up that land, and we won't get a cent. Well, it didn't cost anything. I'd about given up collecting that bill."

Later that day, Jack came in to dinner with a smile on his face. It was the old smile, too; a smile of good-humored self-confidence, which flickered over his lips from side to side, and twisted them, and shut his mouth tight. Just as he was about to speak, his father took a long, neatly folded paper out of his coat pocket and laid it on the table.

"Look at that, Jack," he said; "and show it to your mother."

"Warranty deed!" exclaimed Jack, reading the print on the outside. "Father! you didn't turn it over to me, did you? Mother, it's to John Ogden, Jr.!"

"Oh, John—" she began and stopped.

"Why, my dear," laughed the blacksmith, cheerfully, "it's his gravel, not mine. I'll hold it for him, for a while, but it is Jack's whenever I choose to record that deed."

"I'm afraid I couldn't farm it there," said Jack; and then the smile on his face flickered fast. "But I knew Father wanted that land."

"It isn't worth much, but it's a beginning," said Mary. "I'd like to own something or other, or to go somewhere."

"Well, Molly," answered Jack, smiling, "you can go to Mertonville. Livermore says there's a team here, horses and open carriage. It came over on Friday. The driver has cleared out, and somebody must take them home, and he wants me to drive over. Can't I take Molly, Mother?"

"You'd have to walk back," said his father, "but that's nothing much. It's less than nine miles—"

"Father," said Jack, "you said, last night, I needn't come back to Crofield, right away. And Mertonville's nine miles nearer the city—"

"And a good many times nine miles yet to go," exclaimed the blacksmith; but then he added, smiling: "Go ahead, Jack. I do believe that if any boy can get there, you can."

"I'll do it somehow," said Jack, with a determined nod.

"Of course you will," said Mary.

Jack felt as if circumstances were changing pretty fast, so far as he was concerned; and so did Mary, for she had about given up all hope of seeing her friends in Mertonville.

"We'll get you ready, right away," said Aunt Melinda. "You can give Jack your traveling bag,—he won't mind the key's being lost,—and I'll let you take my trunk, and we'll fit you out so you can enjoy it."

"Jack," said his father, "tell Livermore you can go, and then I want to see you at the shop."

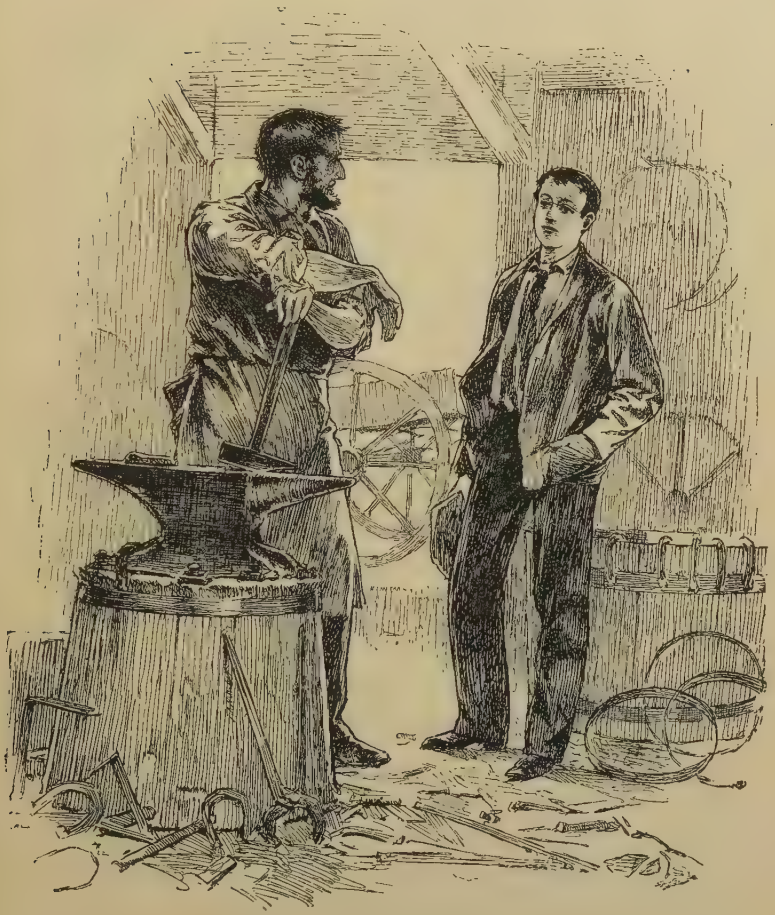
Jack was so glad he could hardly speak; for he felt it was the first step. But a part of his feeling was that he had never before loved Crofield and all the people in it, especially his own family, so much as at that minute.

He went over to the ruined hotel, where he found the landlord at work saving all sorts of things and seeming to feel reasonably cheerful over his misfortunes.

"Jack," he said, as soon as he was told that Jack was ready to go, "you and Molly will have company. Miss Glidden sent to know how she could best get over to Mertonville, and I said she could go with you. There's a visitor, too, who must go back with her.

"I'll take 'em," said Jack.

Upon going to the shop he found his father shoeing a horse. The blacksmith beckoned his son to the further end of the shop. He heard about Miss Glidden, and listened in



He listened in silence.

silence to several hopeful things Jack had to say about what he meant to do sooner or later.

"Well," he said, at last, "I was right not to let you go

before, and I've doubts about it now, but something must be done. I'm making less and less, and not much of it's cash, and it costs more to live, and they're all growing up. I don't want you to make me any promises. They are broken too easily. You needn't form good resolutions. They won't hold water. There's one thing I want you to do, though. Your mother and I have brought you up as straight as a string, and you know what's right and what's wrong."

"That's true," said Jack.

"Well, then, don't you promise nor form any resolutions, but if you're tempted to do wrong, or to be a fool in any kind of way, just don't do it that's all."

"I won't, Father," said Jack earnestly.

"There," said his father, "I feel better satisfied than I should feel if you'd promised a hundred things. It's a great deal better not to do anything that you know to be wrong or foolish."

"I think so," said Jack, "and I won't."

"Go home now and get ready," said his father; "and I'll see you off."

"This is very sudden, Jack," said his mother, with much feeling, when he made his appearance.

"Why, Mother," said Jack, "Molly 'll be back soon, and the city isn't so far away after all."

Jack felt as if he had only about enough head left to change his clothes and drive the team.

"It's just as Mother says," he thought; "I've been wishing and hoping for it, but it's come very suddenly."

His black traveling-bag was quickly ready. He had closed it and was walking to the door when his mother came in.

"Jack," she said, "you'll send me a postal card every day or two?"

"Of course I will," said he bravely.

"And I know you'll be back in a few weeks, at most," she went on; "but I feel as sad as if you were really going away from home. Why, you're almost a child! You can't really be going away!"

That was where the talk stopped for a while, except some last words that Jack could never forget. Then she dried her eyes, and he dried his, and they went down-stairs together. It was hard to say good-by to all the family, and he was glad his father was not there. He got away from them as soon as he could, and went over to the stables after his team. It was a bay team, with a fine harness, and the open carriage was almost new.

"Stylish!" said Jack. "I'll take Molly on the front seat with me,—no, the trunk,—and Miss Glidden's trunk,—well, I'll get 'em all in somehow!"

When he drove up in front of the house his father was there to put the baggage in and to help Mary into the carriage and to shake hands with Jack.

The blacksmith's grimy face looked less gloomy for a moment.

"Jack," he said, "good-by. May be you'll really get to the city after all."

"I think I shall," said Jack, with an effort to speak calmly.

"Well," said the blacksmith, slowly, "I hope you will, somehow; but don't you forget that there's another city."

Jack knew what he meant. They shook hands, and in another moment the bays were trotting briskly on their way to Miss Glidden's. Her house was one of the finest in Crofield, with lawn and shrubbery. Mary Ogden had never been inside of it, but she had heard that it was beautifully furnished. There was Miss Glidden and her friend on the piazza, and out at the sidewalk, by the gate, was a pile of baggage, at the sight of which Jack exclaimed:

"Trunks! They're young houses! How'll I get 'em all in? I can strap and rope one on the back of the carriage, but then—!"

Miss Glidden frowned at first, when the carriage pulled up, but she came out to the gate, smiling, and so did the other lady.

"Why, Mary Ogden, my dear," she said, "Mrs. Potter and I did not know you were going with us. It's quite a surprise."

"So it is to Jack and me," replied Mary quietly. "We were very glad to have you come, though, if we can find room for your trunks."

"I can manage 'em," said Jack. "Miss Glidden, you and Mrs. Potter get in, and Pat and I'll pack the trunks on somehow."

Pat was the man who had brought out the luggage, and he was waiting to help. He was needed. It was a very full carriage when he and Jack finished their work. There was room made for the passengers by putting Mary's small trunk down in front, so that Jack's feet sprawled over it from the nook where he sat.

"I can manage the team," Jack said to himself. "They won't run away with this load."

Mary sat behind him, the other two on the back seat, and all the rest of the carriage was trunks; not to speak of what Jack called a "young house," moored behind.

It all helped Jack to recover his usual composure, nevertheless, and he drove out of Crofield, on the Mertonville road, confidently.

"We shall discern traces of the devastation occasioned by the recent inundation, as we progress," remarked Mrs. Potter.

Jack replied: "Oh, no! The creek takes a great swoop, below Crofield, and the road's a short cut. There'll be some mud, though."

He was right and wrong. There was mud that forced the heavily laden carriage to travel slowly, here and there, but there was nothing seen of the Cocahutchie for several miles.

"Hullo!" exclaimed Jack suddenly. "It looks like a kind of lake. It doesn't come up over the road, though. I wonder what dam has given out now!"

There was the road, safe enough, but all the country to

the right of it seemed to have been turned into water. On rolled the carriage, the horses now and then showing signs of fear and distrust, and the two older passengers expressing ten times as much.

"Now, Molly," said Jack, at last, "there's a bridge across the creek, a little ahead of this. I'd forgotten about that. Hope it's there yet."

"Oh, dear me!" exclaimed Miss Glidden.

"Don't prognosticate disaster," said Mrs. Potter earnestly; and it occurred to Jack that he had heard more long words during that drive than any one boy could hope to remember.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, a few minutes later. "Link's bridge is there! There's water on both sides of the road, though."

It was an old bridge, like that at Crofield, and it was narrow, and it trembled and shook while the snorting bays pranced and shied their frightened way across it. They went down the slope on the other side with a dash that would have been a bolt if Jack had not been ready for them. Jack was holding them with a hard pull upon the reins, but he was also looking up the Cocahutchie.

"I see what's the matter," he said. "The logs got stuck in a narrow place, and made a dam of their own, and set the water back over the flat. The freshet hasn't reached Mertonville yet. Jingo!"

Bang, crack, crash!—came a sharp sound behind him.

"The bridge is down!" he shouted. "We were only

just in time. Some of the logs have been carried down, and one of them knocked it endwise."

That was precisely the truth of the matter; and away went the bays, as if they meant to race with the freshet to see which would first arrive in Mertonville.

"I'm on my way to the city, any how," thought Jack, with deep satisfaction.

CHAPTER VII.

MARY AND THE *EAGLE*.

The bay team traveled well, but it was late in the afternoon when Jack drove into the town. Having been in Mertonville before, Jack knew where to take Miss Glidden and Mrs. Potter.

Mertonville was a thriving place, calling itself a town, and ambitious of some day becoming a city.

Not long after entering the village, Miss Glidden touched Jack's arm.

"Stop, please!" exclaimed Miss Glidden. "There are our friends. The very people we're going to see. Mrs. Edwards and the Judge, and all!"

The party on foot had also halted, and were waiting to greet the visitors. After welcomes had been exchanged, Mrs. Edwards, a tall, dignified lady, with gray hair, turned to Mary and offered her hand.

"I'm delighted to see you, Miss Ogden," she exclaimed, "and your brother John. I've heard so much about you both, from Elder Holloway and the Murdochs. They are expecting you."

"We're going to the Murdochs'," said Mary, a little embarrassed by the warmth of the greeting.

"You will come to see me before you go home?" said Mrs. Edwards. "I don't wonder Miss Glidden is so fond of you and so proud of you. Make her come, Miss Glidden."

"I should be very happy," said Miss Glidden benevolently, "but Mary has so many friends."

"Oh, she'll come," said the Judge himself, very heartily. "If she doesn't, I'll come after her."

"Shall I drive to your house now, Judge Edwards?" Jack said at last.

The party separated, and Jack started the bay team again.

The house of Judge Edwards was only a short distance farther, and that of Mrs. Potter was just beyond.

"Mary Ogden," said Miss Glidden in parting, "you must surely accept Mrs. Edwards's invitation. She is the kindest of women."

"Yes, Miss Glidden," said Mary, demurely.

Jack broke in: "Of course you will. You'll have a real good time, too."

"And you'll come and see me?" said Mrs. Potter, and Mary promised. Then Jack and the Judge's coachman lowered to the sidewalk Miss Glidden's enormous trunk.

As Mrs. Potter alighted, a few minutes later, she declared to Mary:

"I'm confident, my dear, that you will experience enthusiastic hospitality."

"What shall I do?" asked Mary, as they drove away.

"Miss Glidden didn't mean what she said. She is not fond of me."

"The Judge meant it," said Jack. "They liked you. None of them pressed *me* to come visiting, I noticed. I'll leave you at Murdoch's and take the team to the stable, and then go to the office of the *Eagle* and see the editor."

But when they reached the Murdochs', good Mrs. Murdoch came to the door. She kissed Mary, and then said:

"I'm so glad to see you! So glad you've come! Poor Mr. Murdoch—"

"Jack's going to the office to see him," said Mary.

"He needn't go there," said the editor's wife; "Mr. Murdoch is ill at home. The storm and the excitement and the exposure have broken him down. Come right in, dear. Come back, Jack, as soon as you have taken care of the horses."

"It's a pity," said Jack as he drove away. "The *Eagle* will have a hard time of it without any editor."

He was still considering that matter when he reached the livery-stable, but he was abruptly aroused from his thoughts by the owner of the team, who cried excitedly:

"Hurrah! Here's my team! I say, young man, how did you cross Link's bridge? A man on horseback just came here and told us it was down. I was afraid I'd lost my team for a week."

"Well, here they are," said Jack, smiling. "They're both good swimmers, and as for the carriage, it floated like a boat."

"Oh, it did?" laughed the stable-keeper, as he examined his property. "Livermore sent you with them, I suppose. I was losing five dollars a day by not having those horses here. What's your name? Do you live in Crofield?"

"Jack Ogden."

"Oh! you're the blacksmith's son. Old Murdoch told me about you. My name's Prodger. I know your father, and I've known him twenty years. How did you get over the creek—tell me about it?"

Jack told him, and Mr. Prodger drew a long breath at the end of the story.

"You didn't know the risk you were running," he said; "but you did first-rate, and if I needed another driver I'd be glad to hire you. What did Livermore say I was to pay you?"

"He didn't say," said Jack. "I wasn't thinking about being paid."

"So much the better. I think the more of you, my boy. But it was plucky to drive that team over Link's bridge just before it went down. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll pay you what they'll earn me to-night—it will be about three dollars—and we'll call it square. How will that do?"

"It's more than I've earned," said Jack, gratefully.

"I'm satisfied, if you are," said Mr. Prodger as Jack jumped down. "Come and see me again if you're to be in town. You're fond of horses and have a knack with them."

"Three dollars!" said Jack, after the money had been paid him, and he was on his way back to the Murdochs'.

"Mother let me have the six dollars they gave me for the fish. And this makes nine dollars. Why, it will take me the rest of the way to the city—but I wouldn't have a cent when I got there."

When he reached the editor's house, Jack noticed that the house was on the same square with the block of wooden buildings containing the *Eagle* office, and that the editor could go to his work through his own garden, if he chose, instead of around by the street. He was again welcomed by Mrs. Murdoch, and then led at once into Mr. Murdoch's room, where the editor was in bed, groaning and complaining in a way that indicated much distress.

"I'm very sorry you're sick, Mr. Murdoch," said Jack.

"Thank you, Jack. It's just my luck. It's the very worst time for me to be on the sick-list. Nobody to get out the *Eagle*. Lost my 'devil' to-day, too!"

"Lost your 'devil'?" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes," said Mr. Murdoch in despair. "No 'devil'! No editor! Nobody but a wooden foreman and a pair of lead-headed type-stickers. The man that does the mailing has more than he can do, too. There won't be any *Eagle* this week, and perhaps none next week. Plenty of 'copy' nearly ready, too. It's too bad!"

"You needn't feel so discouraged," said Jack, deeply touched by the distress of the groaning editor. "Molly and I know what to do. She can manage the copy, just as she did for the *Standard* once. So can I. We'll go right to work."

"There won't be any Eagle this week."

"Oh, yes, I'd forgotten," said Mr. Murdoch. "You've worked a while at printing. I'm willing you should see what you can do. I'd like to speak to Mary. I'm sorry to say

that you'll have to sleep in the office, Jack, for we've only one spare room in this nutshell of a house."

"I don't mind that," said Jack.

"I hope I'll be out in a day or so," added the editor. "But, Jack, the press is run by a pony steam-engine, and that foreman couldn't run it to save his life," he added hopelessly.

"Why, it's nothing to do," exclaimed Jack. "I've helped run an engine for a steam thrashing-machine. Don't you be worried about the engine."

Mr. Murdoch was able to be up a little while in the evening, and Mary came in to see him. From what he said to her, it seemed as if there was really very little to do in editing the remainder of the next number of the *Eagle*.

"I'm so glad you're here," said Mrs. Murdoch, when Mary came out to supper. "I never read a newspaper myself, and I don't know the first thing about putting one together. It's too bad that you should be bothered with it though."

"Why, Mrs. Murdoch," exclaimed Mary, laughing, "I shall be delighted. I'd rather do it than not."

The truth was that it was not easy for either Mary or her brother to be very sorry that Mr. Murdoch was not able to work. They did not feel anxious about him, for his wife had told them it was not a serious attack, and they enjoyed the prospect of editing the newspaper.

After supper Jack and Mary went through the garden to the *Eagle* office. The pony-engine was in a sort of wood-

shed, the press was in the "kitchen," as Mary called it, and the front room of the little old dwelling-house was the business office. The editor's office and the type-setting room were up-stairs.

Jack took a look at the engine.

"Any one could run that," he said. "I know just how to set it going. Come on, Molly. This is going to be great fun."

The editor's room was only large enough for a table and a chair and a few heaps of exchange newspapers. The table was littered and piled with scraps of writing and printing.

"See!" exclaimed Jack, picking up a sheet of paper. "The last thing Mr. Murdoch did was to finish an account of his visit to Crofield, and the flood. "We'll put that in first thing to-morrow. It's easy to edit a newspaper. Where are the scissors?"

"We needn't bother to write new editorials," said Mary. "Here are all these papers full of them."

"Of course," said Jack. "But we must pick out good ones."

Their tastes differed somewhat, and Mary condemned a number of articles that seemed to Jack excellent. However, she selected a story and some poems and a bright letter from Europe, and Jack found an account of an exciting horse-race, a horrible railway accident, a base-ball match, a fight with Indians, an explosion of dynamite, and several long strips of jokes and conundrums.

"These are splendid editorials!" said Mary, looking up

from her reading. "We can cut them down to fit the *Eagle*, and nobody will suspect that Mr. Murdoch has been away."

"Oh, they'll do," said Jack. "They're all lively. Mr. Murdoch is sure to be satisfied. I don't think he can write better editorials himself."

The young editors were much excited over their work, and soon became so absorbed in their duties that it was ten o'clock before they knew it.

"Now, Molly," said Jack, "we'll go to the house and tell him it's all right. We'll set the *Eagle* a-going in the morning. I knew we could edit it."

Mary had very little to say; her fingers ached from plying the scissors, her eyes burned from reading so much and so fast, and her head was in a whirl.

At the house they met Mrs. Murdoch.

"Oh, my dear children!" exclaimed she to Mary, "Mr. Murdoch is delirious. The doctor's been here, and says he won't be able to think of work—not for days and days. Can you,—*can* you run the *Eagle?* You won't let it stop."

"No, indeed!" said Mary. "There's plenty of 'copy' ready, and Jack can run the engine."

"I'm so glad," said Mrs. Murdoch. "I'd never dare to clip anything. I might make serious mistakes. He's so careful not to attack anything nor to offend anybody. All sorts of people take the *Eagle*, and Mr. Murdoch says he has to steer clear of almost everything."

"We won't write anything," said Jack; "we'll just

select the best there is and put it right in. Those city editors on the big papers know what to write."

The editor's wife was convinced; and, after Mary had gone to her room, Jack returned to a room prepared for him in the *Eagle* office.

"I sha'n't wear my Sunday clothes to-morrow," said Jack; "I'll put on a hickory shirt and old trousers; then I'll be ready to work."

The last thing he remembered saying to himself was:

"Well, I'm nine miles nearer to New York."

Morning came, and Jack was busy before breakfast, but he went to the house early.

"I must be there when the 'hands' come," he said to Mrs. Murdoch. "Molly ought to be in the office, too—"

"I've told Mr. Murdoch," she said, "but he has a severe headache. He can't bear to talk."

"He needn't talk if he doesn't feel able," replied Jack. "The *Eagle* will come out all right!"

Mary could hardly wait to finish her cup of coffee, but she tried hard to appear calm. She was ready as soon as Jack, but she did not have quite so much confidence in her ability to do whatever might be necessary.

There was to be some press-work done that forenoon, and the pony-engine had steam up when the foreman and the two type-setters reached the office.

"Good-morning, Mr. Black," said Jack, as he came into the engine-room. "It's all right. I'm Jack Ogden, a friend

of Mr. Murdoch's. The new editor's upstairs. There's some copy ready. Mr. Murdoch will not be at the office for a week."

"Bless me!" said Mr. Black. "I reckoned that we'd have to strike work. What we need most is a 'devil'—"

"I can be 'devil,'" said Jack. "I used to run the *Standard*."

"Boys," said the foreman, without the change of a muscle in his pasty-looking face, "Murdoch's hired a proxy. I'll go up for copy."

He stumped upstairs to what he called the "sanctum." The door stood open. Mr. Black's eyes blinked rapidly when he saw Mary at the editor's table; but he did not utter a word.

"Good-morning, Mr. Black," said Mary, holding out Mr. Murdoch's manuscript and a number of printed clippings. She rapidly told him what they were, and how each of them was to be printed. Mr. Black heard her to the end, and then he said:

"Good-morning, ma'am. Is your name Murdoch, ma'am?"

"No, sir. Miss Ogden," said Mary. "But no one need be told that Mr. Murdoch is not here. I do not care to see anybody, unless it's necessary."

"Yes, ma'am," said Mr. Black. "We'll go right along, ma'am. We're glad the *Eagle* is to come out on time, ma'am."

He was very respectful, as if the idea of having a young

girl as editor awed him; and he backed out of the office, with both hands full of copy, to stump down-stairs and tell his two journeymen:

"It's all right, boys. Bless me! I never saw the like before."

He explained the state of affairs, and each in turn soon managed to make an errand up-stairs, and then to come down again almost as awed as Mr. Black had been.

"She's a driver," said the foreman. "She was made for a boss. She has it in her eye."

Even Jack, when he was sent up after copy, was a little astonished.

"That's the way father looks," he thought, "whenever he begins to lose his temper. The men mind him then, too; but he has to be waked up first. I know how she feels. She's bound the *Eagle* shall come out on time!"

Even Jack did not appreciate how responsibility was waking up Mary Ogden, or how much older she felt than when she left Crofield; but he had an idea that she was taller, and that her eyes had become darker.

Mr. Bones, the man of all work in the front office below, was of the opinion that she was very tall, and that her eyes were very black, and that he did not care to go up-stairs again; for he had blundered into the sanctum, supposing that Mr. Murdoch was there, and remarking as he came:

"Sa-ay, that there underdone gawk that helps edit the *Inquirer*, he was jist in, lookin' for—yes, ma'am! Beg pardon, ma'am! I'm only Bones—"

"What did the gentleman want, Mr. Bones?" asked Mary, with much dignity. "Mr. Murdoch is at home. He is ill. Is it anything I can attend to?"

"Oh, no, ma'am; nothing, ma'am. He's a blower. We don't mind him, ma'am. I'll go down right away, ma'am. I'll see Mr. Black, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am."

He withdrew with many bows; and while down-stairs he saw Jack, and he not only saw, but felt, that something very new and queer had happened to the Mertonville *Eagle*.

Both Mary and Jack were aware that there was a rival newspaper, but it had not occurred to them that they were at all interested in the *Inquirer*, or in its editors, beyond the fact that both papers were published on Thursdays, and that the *Eagle* was the larger.

The printers worked fast that day, as if something spurred them on, and Mr. Black was almost bright when he reported to Mary how much they had done during the day.

"The new boy's the best 'devil' we ever had, ma'am," said he. "Please say to Mr. Murdoch we'd better keep him."

"Thank you, Mr. Black," said she. "I hope Mr. Murdoch will soon be well."

He stumped away, and it seemed to her as if her dignity barely lasted until she and Jack found themselves in Mr. Murdoch's garden, on their way home. It broke completely down as they were going between the sweet-corn and the tomatoes, and there they both stopped and laughed heartily.

"But, Molly," Jack exclaimed, when he recovered his

breath, "we'll have to print the liveliest kind of an *Eagle*, or the *Inquirer* will get ahead of us. I'm going out, after supper, all over town, to pick up news. If I can only find some boys I know here, they could tell me a lot of good items. The boys know more of what's going on than anybody."

"I'd like to go with you," said Mary. "Stir around and find out all you can."

"I know what to do," said Jack, with energy, and if he had really undertaken to do all he proceeded to tell her, it would have kept him out all night.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT FOR A BURGLAR.

Supper was ready when Jack and Mary went into the house, and Mrs. Murdoch was eager that they should eat at once. She seemed very placidly to take it for granted that things were going properly in the *Eagle* office. Her husband had been ill before, and the paper had somehow lived along, and she was not the kind of woman to fret about it.

"He's been worrying," she said to Mary, "principally about town news. He's afraid the *Inquirer* 'll get ahead of you. It might be good to see him."

"I'll see him," said Mary.

"Mary! Mary!" came faintly in reply to her kindly greeting. "Local items, Mary. Society Notes—the flood—logs—bridges—dams—fires. Brief Mention. Town Improvement Society—the Sociable—anything!"

"Jack will be out after news as soon as he eats his supper," said Mary. "He'll find all there is to find. The printers did a splendid day's work."

"The doctor says not to tell me about anything," said the sick man, despondently. "You'll fill the paper somehow. Do the best you can, till I get well."

She did not linger, for Mrs. Murdoch was already pulling her sleeve. The three were soon seated at the table, and hardly was a cup of tea poured before Mrs. Murdoch remarked:

"Mary," she said, "Miss Glidden called here to-day, with Mrs. Judge Edwards, in her carriage. They were sorry to find you out. So did Mrs. Mason, and so did Mrs. Lansing, and Mrs. Potter. They wanted you to go riding, and there's a lawn-tennis party coming. I told them all that Mr. Murdoch was sick, and you were editing the *Eagle*, and Jack was, too. Miss Glidden's very fond of you, you know. So is Mrs. Potter. Her husband wishes he knew what to send Jack for saving his wife from being drowned."

This was delivered steadily but not rapidly, and Mary needed only to say she would have been glad to see them all.

"I didn't save anybody," said Jack. "If the logs had hit the bridge while we were on it, nothing could have saved us."

Mary was particularly glad that none of her new friends were coming in to spend the evening, for she felt she had done enough for one day. Mrs. Murdoch, however, told her of a "Union Church Sociable," to be held at the house of Mrs. Edwards, the next Thursday evening, and said she had promised to bring Miss Ogden. Of course Mary said she would go, but Jack declined.

After supper, Jack was eager to set out upon his hunt after news-items.

"I mustn't let a soul know what I'm doing," he said to Mary. "We'll see whether I can't find out as much as the *Inquirer's* man can."

He hurried away from the house, but soon ceased to walk fast and began to peer sharply about.

"There's a new building going up," he said, as he turned a corner; "I'll find out about it."

So he did, but it was only "by the way"; he really had a plan, and the next step took him to Mr. Prodger's livery-stable.

"Well, Ogden," said Prodger, when he came in. "That bay team has earned eight dollars and fifty cents to-day I'm glad you brought them over. How long are you going to be in town?"

"I can't tell," said Jack. "I'm staying at Murdoch's."

"The editor's? He's a good fellow, but the *Eagle* is slow. All dry fodder. No vinegar. No pickles. He needs waking up. Tell him about Link's bridge!"

That was a good beginning, and Jack soon knew just how high the water had risen in the creek at Mertonville; how high it had ever risen before; how many logs had been saved; how near Sam Hutchins and three other men came to being carried over the dam; and what people talked about doing to prevent another flood, and other matters of interest. Then he went among the stable-men, who had been driving all day, and they gave him a number of items. Jack relied mainly upon his memory, but he soon gathered such a budget of facts that he had to go to the

public reading-room and work a while with pencil and paper, for fear of forgetting his treasures.

Out he went again, and it was curious how he managed to slip in among knots of idlers, and set them to talking, and make them tell all they knew.

"I'm getting the news," he said to himself; "only there isn't much worth the time." After a few moments he exclaimed, "This is the darkest, meanest part of all Mertonville!"

It was the oldest part of the village, near the canal and the railway station, and many of the houses were dilapidated. Jack was thinking that Mary might write something about improving such a neglected, squalid quarter, when he heard a shriek from the door of a house near by.

"Robbers!—thieves!—fire!—murder!—rob-bers!—villains!"

It was the voice of a woman, and had a crack in it that made it sound as if two voices were trying to choke each other.

"Robbers!" shouted Jack springing forward, just as two very short men dashed through the gate and disappeared in the darkness.

If they were robbers they were likely to get away, for they ran well.

Jack Ogden did not run very far. He heard other footsteps. There were people coming from the opposite direction, but he paid no attention to them, until just as he was passing the gate.

Then he felt a hand on his left shoulder, and another hand on his right shoulder, and suddenly he found himself lying flat on his back upon the sidewalk.

"Hold him, boys!"

"We've got him!"

"Hold him down!"

"Tie him! We needn't gag him. Tie him tight! We've got him!"

There were no less than four men, and two held his legs, while the other two pinioned his arms, all the while threatening him with terrible things if he resisted.

It was in vain to struggle, and every time he tried to speak they silenced him. Besides, he was too much astonished to talk easily, and all the while an unceasing torrent of abuse was poured upon him, over the gate, by the voice that had given the alarm.

"We've got him, Mrs. McNamara! He can't get away this time. The young villain!"

"They were goin' to brek into me house, indade," said Mrs. McNamara. "The murdherin' vagabones!"

"What'll we do with him now, boys?" asked one of his captors. "I don't know where to take him—do you, Deacon Abrams?"

"What's your name, you young thief?" sternly demanded another.

Jack had begun to think. One of his first thoughts was, that a gang of desperate robbers had seized him. The next idea was, that he never met four more stupid-looking men in

Mertonville, nor anywhere else. He resolved that he would not tell his name, to have it printed in the *Inquirer*, and so made no answer.

"That's the way of thim," said Mrs. McNamara. "He's game, and he won't pache. The joodge 'll have to mak him spake. Ye'd betther lock him up, and kape him till day."

"That's it, Deacon Abrams."

"That's just it," said the man spoken to. "We can lock him up in the back room of my house, while we go and find the constable."

Away they went, guarding their prisoner on the way as if they were afraid of him.

They soon came to the dwelling of Deacon Abrams.

It was hard for Jack Ogden, but he bore it like a young Mohawk Indian. It would have been harder if it had not been so late, and if more of the household had been there to see him. As it was, doors opened, candles flared, old voices and young voices asked questions, a baby cried, and then Jack heard a very sharp voice.

"Sakes alive, Deacon! You can't have that ruffian here! We shall all be murdered!"

"Only till I go and find the constable, Jerusha," said the deacon, pleadingly. "We'll lock him in the back room, and Barney and Pettigrew 'll stand guard at the gate, with clubs, while Smith and I are gone."

There was another protest, and two more children began to cry, but Jack was led on into his prison-cell.

It was a comfortable room, containing a bed and a chair.

There was real ingenuity in the way they secured Jack Ogden. They backed a chair against a bedpost and made him sit down, and then they tied the chair, and the wicked young robber in it, to the post.

"There!" said Deacon Abrams. "He can't get away now!" and in a moment more Jack heard the key turn in the lock, and he was left in the dark, alone and bound,—a prisoner under a charge of burglary.

"I never thought of this thing happening to me," he said to himself, gritting his teeth and squirming on his chair. "It's pretty hard. May be I can get away, though. They thought they pulled the ropes tight, but then—"

The hempen fetters really hurt him a little, but it was partly because of the chair.

"May be I can kick it out from under me," he said to himself, "and loosen the ropes."

Out it came, after a tug, and then Jack could stand up.

"I might climb on the bed, now the ropes are loose," he said, "and lift the loops over the post Then I could crawl out of 'em."

He was excited, and worked quickly. In a moment he was standing in the middle of the room, with only his hands tied behind him.

"I can cut that cord," he thought, "if I can find a nail in the wall."

He easily found several, and one of them had a rough edge on the head of it, and after a few minutes of hard sawing, the cord was severed.

"It's easy to saw twine," said he. "Now for the next thing."

He went to the window and looked out into the darkness.

"I'm over the roof of the kitchen," he said, "and that tree's close to it."

Up went the window—slowly, carefully, noiselessly—and out crept Jack upon that roof. It was steep, but he stole along the ridge. Now he could reach the tree.

"It's an apple-tree," he said. "I can reach that longest branch, and swing off, and go down it hand over hand."

At an ordinary time, few boys would have thought it could be done, and Jack had to gather all his courage to make the attempt; but he slid down and reached for that small, frail limb, from his perilous perch in the gutter of the roof.

"Now!" said Jack to himself.

Off he went with a quick grasp, and then another lower along the branch, before it had time to break, but his third grip was on a larger limb, below, and he believed he was safe.

"I must be quick!" he said. "Somebody is striking a light in that room!"

Hand over hand for a moment, and then he was astride of a limb. Soon he was going down the trunk; and then the window (which he had closed behind him) went up, and he heard Deacon Abrams exclaiming:

"He couldn't have got out this way, could he? Stop thief! Stop thief!"

"Let 'em chase!" muttered Jack, as his feet reached the ground. "This is the liveliest kind of news-item!"

Jack vaulted over the nearest fence, ran across a garden, climbed over another fence, ran through a lot, and came out into a street on the other side of the square.

"I've got a good start, now," he thought, "but I'll keep right on. They don't expect me at Murdoch's to-night. If I can only get to the *Eagle* office! Nobody 'll hunt for me there!"

He heard the sound of feet, at that moment, around the next corner. Open went the nearest gate, and in went Jack, and before long he was scaling more fences.

"It's just like playing 'Hare-and-Hounds,'" remarked Jack, as he once more came out into a street. "Now for the *Eagle*, and it won't do to run. I'm safe."

He heard some running and shouting after that, however, and he did not really feel secure until he was on his bed, with the doors below locked and barred.

"Now they can hunt all night!" he said to himself, laughing. "I've made plenty of news for Mary."

So she thought next morning; and the last "news-item" brought out the color in her cheeks and the brightness in her eyes.

"I'll write it out," she said, "just as if you were the real robber, and we'll print it!"

"Of course," said Jack; "but I'd better keep shady for a day or so. I wish I was on my way to New York!"

"Seems to me as if you were," said Mary. "They won't

come here after you. The paper's nearly full, now, and it'll be out to-morrow!"

Mr. Murdoch would have been gratified to see how Mary and Jack worked that day. Even Mr. Black and the type-setters worked with energy, and so did Mr. Bones, and there was no longer any doubt that the *Eagle* would be printed on time. Mr. Murdoch felt better the moment he was told by Mary, at tea-time, that she had found editing no trouble at all. He was glad, he said, that all had been so quiet, and that nobody had called at the editor's office, and that people did not know he was sick. As to that, however, Mr. Bones had not told Mary how much he and Mr. Black had done to protect her from intrusion. They had been like a pair of watch-dogs, and it was hardly possible for any outsider to pass them. As for Jack, he was not seen outside of the *Eagle* all that day.

"If any of Deacon Abram's posse should come in," he remarked to Mary, "they wouldn't know me with all the ink that's on my face."

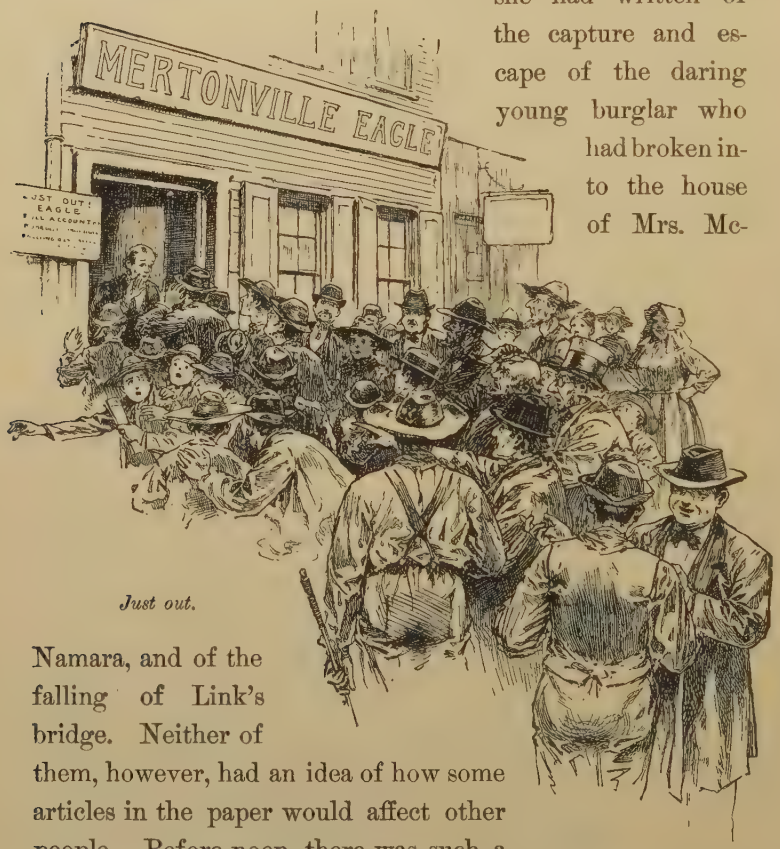
"Mother would have to look twice," laughed Mary. "Don't I wish I knew what people will think of the paper!"

She did not find out at once, even on Thursday. Jack had the engine going on time, and as fast as papers were printed, the distribution of them followed. It was a very creditable *Eagle*, but Mary blushed when she read in print the account Mr. Murdoch had written of the doings in Crofield.

"They'll think Jack's a hero," she said, "and what will

they think of me?—and what will Miss Glidden say? But then he has complimented her."

Jack, too, was much pleased to read the vivid accounts she had written of the capture and escape of the daring young burglar who had broken into the house of Mrs. Mc-



Just out.

Namara, and of the falling of Link's bridge. Neither of them, however, had an idea of how some articles in the paper would affect other people. Before noon, there was such a rush for *Eagles*, at the front office, that Mr. Black got out another ream of paper to print a second edition, and Mr.

Bones had almost to fight to keep the excited crowd from going up-stairs to see for themselves whether the editor was there. Before night, poor Mrs. Murdoch went to the door thirty times to say to eager inquirers that Mr. Murdoch was in bed, and that Dr. Follet had forbidden him to see anybody, or to talk one word, or to get himself excited.

"What's the matter with the people?" she said wearily. "Can it be possible that anything's the matter with the *Eagle?* Mary Ogden said she'd taken the very best editorials from the city papers."

The *Inquirer* was nowhere that Thursday, and the excitement over the *Eagle* increased all the afternoon.

"It's all right, Mrs. Murdoch," said Jack, at supper. "Bones says he has sold more than two hundred extra copies."

"I'm glad of that," she said, "and I'll tell Mr. Murdoch; but he mustn't read it."

When she did so, he smiled faintly and with an effort feebly responded:

"Thank Mary for me. I suppose they wanted to read about the flood."

Mr. Bones had not seen fit to report to Mary that a baker's dozen of old subscribers had ordered their paper stopped; nor that one angry man with a big club in his hand had inquired for the editor; nor that Deacon Abrams, and the Town Constable, and three other men, and a lawyer had called to see the editor about the robbery at Mrs. McNamara's; nor that the same worthy woman, with her arms

akimbo and her bonnet falling back, had fiercely demanded of him:

"Fwhat for did yez print all that about me howlin'? Wudn't ony woman spake, was she bein' robbed and murdhered?"

Bones had pacified Mrs. McNamara only by sitting still and hearing her out, and he would not for anything have mentioned it to Miss Ogden. She therefore had only good news to tell at the house, and Mrs. Murdoch's replies related chiefly to the Union Church Sociable at Judge Edwards's.

"Mr. Murdoch is quiet," she said, "and he may sleep all the time we're gone."

"I'll be on hand to look out for him," said Jack, "I'm not going anywhere."

That reassured them as to leaving home, and Mrs. Murdoch and Mary departed without anxiety; but they had hardly entered the Edwards's house before they found that many other people were very much less placid.

The first person to come forward, after Mrs. Edwards had welcomed them, was Miss Glidden.

"Oh, Mary Ogden!" she exclaimed, very sweetly and benevolently. "My dear! Why did you say so much about me in the *Eagle?*"

"That was Mr. Murdoch's work," said Mary. "I had nothing to do with it."

"And that robbery and escape was really shocking."

"Exactly!" They heard a sharp, decided voice near

them, and it came from a thin little man in a white cravat. "You are right, Elder Holloway! When a leading journal like the *Eagle* finds it needful to denounce so sternly the state of the public streets in Mertonville, it is time for the people to act. We ministers must hold a council right away."

Mary remembered a political editorial she had taken from a New York paper, and had cut down to fit the *Eagle*; but its effect was something unexpected.

A deeper voice on her left spoke next.

"There was serious talk among the hotel-men and inn-keepers of mobbing the *Eagle* office to-day!"

"That," thought Mary, "must be the high-license editorial from that Philadelphia weekly."

"We must *act*, Judge Edwards!" exclaimed another voice. "Nobody knows Murdoch's politics, but his denunciation of the prevailing corruption is terrible. There's a storm rising. The Republican Committee has called a special meeting to consider the matter, and we Democrats must do the same. The *Eagle* is right about it, too; but it was a daring step for him to take."

"That's the editorial from the Chicago daily," thought Mary; "the last part was from that Boston paper! Oh, dear me! What have I done?"

She had to ask herself that question a dozen times that evening, and she wished Jack had been there to hear what was said.

The sociable went gayly on, nevertheless, and all the while

Jack sat in Mrs. Murdoch's dining-room, his face fairly glowing red with the interest he took in something spread out upon the table before him. It was a large map of New York city that he had found in the *Eagle* office and brought to the house.

CHAPTER IX.

NEARER THE CITY.

Mary Ogden would have withdrawn into some quiet corner, at the sociable, if it had not been for Elder Holloway and Miss Glidden, who seemed determined to prevent her from being overlooked. All those who had called upon Mrs. Murdoch knew that Mary had had something to do with that extraordinary number of the *Eagle*, and they told others, but Mrs. Murdoch escaped all discussion about the *Eagle* by saying she had not read it, and referring every one to Miss Ogden.

Mary was glad when the evening was over. After hearing the comments of the public, there was something about their way of editing the paper that seemed almost dishonest.

Jack was still up when she came home.

"I've used my time better than if I'd gone to the party," he said. "I've studied the map of New York. I'd know just how to go around, if I was there. I am going to study it all the time I'm here."

Mr. Murdoch was better. He had had a comfortable night, and felt able to think of business again.

"Now, my dear," he said to his wife, "I'm ready to

take a look at the *Eagle*. I am glad it was a good number."

"They talked about it all last evening at the sociable," she answered, as she handed him a copy.

He was even cheerful, when he began; and he studied the paper as Jack had studied the map. It was a long time before he said a word.

"My account of the flood is really capital," he said, at last, "and all that about Crofield matters. The report of things in Mertonville is good; that about the logs, the dam, the burglary—a very extraordinary occurrence, by the way—it's a blessing they didn't kill Mrs. McNamara. The story is good; funny-column good. But—oh, gracious! Oh, Mary Ogden! Oh my stars! What's this?

He had begun on the editorials, and he groaned and rolled about while he was reading them.

"They'll mob the *Eagle!*" he said at last. "I must get up! Oh, but this is dreadful! She's pitched into everything there is! I must get up at once!"

Those editorials were a strong tonic, or else Mr. Murdoch's illness was over. He dressed himself, and walked out into the kitchen. His wife had not heard him say he would get up, but she seemed almost to have expected it.

"It's the way you always do," she said. "I'm never much scared about you. You'll never die till your time comes. I think Mary is over at the office."

"I'm going there, now," he said, excitedly. "If this work goes on, I shall have the whole town about my ears."

He was right. Mary had been at her table promptly that morning to make a beginning on the next number; Jack was down in the engine-room; Mr. Black was busy, and Mr. Bones was out, when a party of very red-faced men filed in, went through the front office, and climbed the stairs.

"We'll show him!" said one.

"It'll be a lesson he won't forget!" remarked another, fiercely.

"He'll take it back, or there will be broken bones!" added another; and these spoke for the rest. They had sticks, and they tramped heavily as they marched to the "sanctum." The foremost opened the door, without knocking, and his voice was deep, threatening, and husky as he began:

"Now, Mr. Editor—"

"I'm the editor, sir. What do you wish of me?"

Mary Ogden stood before him, looking him straight in the face without a quiver.

He was a big man; but, oddly enough, it occurred to him that Mary seemed larger than he was.

"Bob!" exclaimed a harsh whisper behind him, "howld yer tongue! it's only a gir–rl! Don't ye say a har–rd word to the loikes o' her!"

Other whispers and growls came from the hall, but the big man stood like a stone post for several seconds.

"You're the editor?" he gasped. "Is old Murdoch dead,—or has he run away?"

"*I'm the Editor, sir.*"

"He's at home, and ill," said Mary. "What is your errand?"

"I keep a decent hotel, sir,—ma'am—madam—I do,—we all do,—it's the *Eagle*, you know,—and there's no kind of

disorder,—and there was never any complaint in Mertonville—"

"Howld on, Bob!" exclaimed the prompter behind him. "You're no good at all; coom along, b'ys. Be civil,—Mike Flaherty will never have it said he brought a shillalah to argy wid a colleen. I'm aff!"

Away he went, stick and all, and the other five followed promptly, leaving Mary Ogden standing still in amazement. She was trying to collect her thoughts when Mr. Black marched in from the other room, followed by the two typesetters; and Mr. Bones tumbled up-stairs, out of breath.

Mary had hardly any explanation to make about what Mr. Bones frantically described as "the riot," and she was inclined to laugh at it. Just then Mr. Murdoch himself came to the door.

Jack stopped the engine, exclaiming, "Mr. Murdoch! you here?"

"What is it? What is it?" he exclaimed. "I saw them go out. Did they break anything?"

"Miss Ogden scared 'em off in no time," said Mr. Black.

Mary resigned the editorial chair to Mr. Murdoch. Bones brought in two office chairs; Mr. Black appeared with a very high stool that usually stood before one of his typecases; Mary preferred one of the office chairs, and there she sat a long time, replying to Mr. Murdoch's questions and remarks. She had plenty to tell, after all she had heard at the sociable, and Mr. Murdoch groaned at times, but still he thanked her for her efforts. Meanwhile Mr. Black went to

the engine-room with an errand for Jack that sent him over to the other side of the village. Jack looked in the little cracked mirror in the front room as he went out.

"Ink enough; they'll never know me," said Jack. "I'm safe enough. Besides, Mrs. McNamara wasn't robbed at all. She was yelling because she thought robbers were coming."

He loitered along on his way back, with his eyes open and his ears ready to catch any bit of stray news, and paused a moment to peer into a small shoe-shop.

It was only a momentary glance, but a hammer ceased tapping upon a lapstone, and a tall man straightened up suddenly and very straight, as he untied his leather apron.

"That's the fellow!" he exclaimed under his breath, but Jack heard him.

"He knew me! He knew me! I can't stay in Mertonville!" thought Jack. "There'll be trouble now."

He started at a run, but it was so early that he attracted little attention.

His return to the *Eagle* office was so quick that Mr. Black opened his eyes in surprise.

"I've got to see Mr. Murdoch," Jack said hurriedly, and up-stairs he darted, to break right in upon the conference between the editors.

Jack told his story, and Mr. Murdoch felt it was only another blow added to the many already fallen upon him and his *Eagle*. "Perhaps you will be better satisfied to leave town," said Mr. Murdoch, uneasily.

"I've enough money to take me to the city, and I'll go. I'm off for New York!" said Jack, eagerly.

"New York?" exclaimed Mr. Murdoch. "That's the thing! Go to the house and get ready. I'll buy you a ticket to Albany, and you can go down on the night boat. They're taking passengers for half a dollar. You mustn't be caught! No doubt they are hunting for you now."

Mr. Murdoch was right. At that very moment the cobbler was in the grocery kept by Deacon Abrams, shouting, "We've got him again, Deacon! He's in town. He works in a paint shop—had paint on his face. Or else he's a blacksmith, or he works in coal, or something black—or dusty. We can run him down now."

While they went for the two others who knew Jack's face, he was putting on his Sunday clothes and packing up. When he came down, there was no ink upon his face, his collar was clean, his hair was brushed, and he was a complete surprise to Mr. Black and the rest.

"I can get a new boy," said Mr. Murdoch, as if he were beginning to recover his spirits; "and I can run the engine myself now I'm well. I can say in the next *Eagle* that you are gone to the city, and that will help me out of my troubles."

Neither Jack nor Mary quite understood what he meant, and, in fact, they were not thinking about him just then. Mr. Murdoch had said that there was only time to catch the express-train, and they were saying good-by. Mary was

crying for the moment, and Jack was telling her what to write to his mother and father and those at home in Crofield.

"It's so sudden, Jack!" said Mary. "But I'm glad you're going. I wish I could go, too."

"I wish you could," said Jack, heartily; "but I'll write. I'll tell you everything. Good-by, Mr. Murdoch's waiting. Good-by!"

The *Eagle* editor was indeed waiting, and he was very uneasy. "What a calamity it would be," he thought, "to have my own 'devil' arrested for burglary. The *Inquirer* would enjoy that! It isn't Jack's fault, but I can't bear everything!"

Meanwhile Mary sat at the table and pretended to look among the papers for a new story, but really she was trying to keep from crying over Jack's departure. Mr. Murdoch and Jack had gone to the station.

There was cunning in the plans of the pursuers of Mrs. McNamara's burglar this time. Three of them, each aided by several eager volunteers, dashed around Mertonville, searching every shop in which any sort of face-blacking might be used, and Deacon Abrams himself went to the station with a justice of the peace, a notary-public, a constable, and the man that kept the village pound.

"He won't get by *me*," said the deacon wisely, as Mr. Murdoch and a neatly dressed young gentleman passed him, arm in arm.

"Good morning, Mr. Murdoch. The *Eagle's* improving.

You did me justice. We're after that same villain now. We'll get him this time, too."

"Deacon," said the editor, gripping Jack's arm hard, "I'll mention your courage and public spirit again. Tie him tighter next time."

"We will," said the deacon; "and I've got some new subscribers for you, and a column advertisement."

"There," said Mr. Murdoch, "jump right in."

Mr. Murdoch hurried to the ticket-window, and Jack patiently looked away from Deacon Abrams all the while.

"There," said Mr. Murdoch, "jump right in. Keep your satchel with you. I'm going back to the office."

"Good-by," said Jack, pocketing his ticket and entering the car.

He took a seat by the open window, just as the train started.

"Jack's gone, Mary," exclaimed Mr. Murdoch, under his breath, as he re-entered the *Eagle* office. "Have those men been here again?"

"No," said Mary. "But the chairmen of the two central committees have both been here. Elder Holloway said they would. They will call again."

"What did you say?" the editor asked.

"Why," replied Mary, "I told them you were just getting well."

"So I am," said Mr. Murdoch. "There's a great demand for that number of the *Eagle*. Forty-six old subscribers have stopped their papers, but a hundred and twenty-seven new ones have come in. I can't guess where this will end. Are you going to the house?"

"I think I'd better," said Mary. "If there's anything more I can do—"

"No, no, no! Don't spoil your visit," said he, hastily. "You've had work enough. Now you must be free to rest a little, and meet your friends."

He would not say he was afraid to have her in the *Eagle* office, to stir up storms for him. But Mary made no objection—she was very willing to give up the work.

Mr. Murdoch came home in a more hopeful state of mind, but soon went to his room and lay down.

"My dear," he said to his wife, "the paper's going right along; but I'm too much exhausted to see anybody. Tell 'em all I'm not well."

Mary was uneasy about Jack, but she need not have worried. The moment the train was in motion, he forgot even Deacon Abrams and Mrs. McNamara in the grand thought that he was actually on his way to the city.

"This train's an express train," he said to himself. "Doesn't she go! I said I'd get there some day, and now I'm really going! Hurrah for New York! It's good I learned something about the streets—I'll know what to do when I get there."

He had nine dollars in his pocket for capital, but he knew more or less of several businesses and trades.

In the seat in front of him were two gentlemen, who must have been railway men, he thought, from what they said, and it occurred to Jack that he would like to learn how to build a railway.

The train stopped at last, after a long journey, and a well-dressed man got in, came straight to Jack's seat, took the hitherto empty half of it, and began to talk with the men in front as if he had come on board for the purpose. At first Jack paid little attention, but soon they began to mention places he knew.

"So far, so good," remarked the man at his side; "but we're going to have trouble in getting the right of way through Crofield. We'll have to pay a big price for that hotel if we can't use the street."

"I think not," said Jack, with a smile. "There isn't much hotel left in Crofield, now. It was burned down last Sunday."

"What?" exclaimed one of the gentlemen in front. "Are you from Crofield?"

"I live there," said Jack. "Your engineer was there about the time of the fire. The old bridge is down. I heard him say that your line would cross just below it."

The three gentlemen were all attention, and the one who had not before spoken said:

"I know. Through the old Hammond property."

"It used to belong to Mr. Hammond," replied Jack, "but it belongs to my father now."

"Can you give me a list of the other owners of property?" asked the railway man with some interest.

"I can tell you who owns every acre around Crofield, boundary lines and all," answered Jack. "I was born there. You don't know about the people, though. They'll do almost anything to have the road there. My father will help all he can. He says the place is dead now."

"What's his name?" asked the first speaker, with a note-book and a pencil in his hand.

"His is John Ogden. Mine's Jack Ogden. My father knows every man in the county," replied Jack.

"Ogden," said the gentleman in the forward seat, next the window. "My name's Magruder; we three are directors in the new road. I'm a director in this road. Are you to stay in Albany?"

"I go by the night boat to New York," said Jack, almost proudly.

"Can you stay over a day? We'll entertain you at the Delavan House if you'll give us some information."

"Certainly; I'll be glad to," said Jack; and so when the train stopped at Albany, Jack was talking familiarly enough with the three railway directors.

Mary Ogden had a very clear idea that Mr. Murdoch preferred to make up the next paper without any help from her, and even Mrs. Murdoch was almost glad to know that her young friend was to spend the next week with Mrs. Edwards.

One peculiar occurrence of that day had not been reported at the *Eagle* office, and it had consequences. The Committee of Six, who had visited the sanctum so threateningly, went away beaten, but recounted their experience. They did so in the office of the Mertonville Hotel, and Mike Flaherty had more than a little to say about "that gurril," and about "the black eyes of her," and the plucky way in which she had faced them.

One little old gentleman whose eyes were still bright, in spite of his gray hair, stood in the door and listened, with his hand behind his ear.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed this little old man, turning to the men behind him. "Did you hear 'em? I guess I know what we ought to do. Come on into Crozier's with me—all of you. We must give her a testimonial for her pluck."

"Crozier's?" asked a portly, well-dressed man. "Nothing there but dry-goods."

"Come, Jeroliman. You're a banker and you're needed. I dare you to come!" said the little old man, jokingly, leading the way.

Seven of them reached the dress-goods counter of the largest store in Mertonville, and here the little old gentleman bought black silk for a dress.

"You brought your friends, I see, General Smith," said the merchant, laughing. "One of your jokes, eh?"

"No joke at all, Crozier; a testimonial of esteem,"—and three gentlemen helped one another to tell the story.

"I'll make a good reduction, for my share," exclaimed the merchant, as he added up the figures of the bill. "Will that do, General?"

"I'll join in," promptly interposed Mr. Jeroliman, the banker, laughing. "I won't take a dare from General Smith. Come, boys."

They were old enough boys, but they all "chipped in," and General Smith's dare did not cost him much, after all.

Mary Ogden had the map of New York out upon the table that evening, and was examining it, when there came a ring at the door-bell.

"It's a boy from Crozier's with a package," said Mrs. Murdoch; "and Mary, it's for you!"

"For me?" said Mary, in blank astonishment.

It was indeed addressed to her, and contained a short note:

"The girl who was not afraid of six angry men is requested to accept this silk dress, with the compliments of her admiring friends,

"Seven Old Men of Mertonville."

"Oh, but, Mrs. Murdoch," said Mary, in confusion, "I don't know what to say or do. It's very kind of them!—but ought I to take it?"

This testimonial pleased Mr. Murdoch even more than it pleased Mary. He insisted Mary should keep it, and she at last consented.

But not even the new dress made Mary forget to wonder how Jack was faring.

The lightning express made short work of the trip to Albany, and Jack was glad of it, for he had not had any dinner. His new acquaintances invited him to accompany them to the Delavan House.

As they left the station, Mr. Magruder took from his pocket a small pamphlet.

"Humph!" he said. "Guide-book to the New York City and Hudson River. I had forgotten that I had it. Don't you want it, Ogden? It'll be something to read on the boat."

"Won't you keep it?" asked Jack, hesitating.

"Oh, no," said Mr. Magruder. "I was going to throw it away."

So Jack put the book into his pocket. It was a short

walk to the Delavan House, but it was through more bustle and business, considering how quiet everybody was, Jack thought, than he ever saw before. He went with the rest to the hotel office, and heard Mr. Magruder give directions about Jack's room and bill.

"He's going to pay for me for one day," Jack said to himself, "and until the evening boat goes to-morrow."

"Ogden," said Mr. Magruder, "I can't ask you to dine with us. It's a private party—have your dinner, and then wait for me here."

"All right," said Jack, and then he stood still and tried to think what to do.

"I must go to my room, now, and leave my satchel there," he said to himself. "I don't want anybody to know I never was in a big hotel before."

He managed to get to his room without making a single blunder, but the moment he closed the door he felt awed and put down.

"It's the finest room I was ever in in all my life!" he exclaimed. "They must have made a mistake. Perhaps I'll have a bedroom like this in my own house some day."

Jack made himself look as neat as if he had come out of a bandbox, before he went down-stairs.

The dining-room was easily found, and he was shown to a seat at one of the tables, and a bill of fare was handed him; but that was only one more puzzle.

"I don't know what some of these are," he said to him-

self. "I'll try things I couldn't get in Crofield. I'll begin on those clams with little necks."

So the waiter set before him a plate of six raw clams.

That was a good beginning; for every one of them seemed to speak to him of the salt ocean.

After that he went farther down the bill of fare and selected such dishes as, he said, "nobody ever saw in Crofield."

It was a grand dinner, and Jack was almost afraid he had been too long over it.

He went out to the office and looked around, and asked the clerk if Mr. Magruder had been inquiring for him.

"Not yet, Mr. Ogden," said the clerk. "He is not yet through dinner. Did you find your room all right?"

"All right," said Jack. "I'll sit down and wait for Mr. Magruder."

It was an hour before the railway gentlemen returned. There were twice as many of them now, however, and Mr. Magruder remarked:

"Come, Ogden, we won't detain you long. After that you can do what you like. Thank you very much, too."

Jack followed them into a private sitting-room, which seemed to him so richly furnished that he really wished it had been plainer; but he found the men very straightforward about their business.

They all sat down around the table in the middle of the room.

"We'll finish Ogden first, and let him go," said Mr.

Magruder, laughing. "Ogden, here's a map of Crofield and all the country from there to Mertonville. I want to ask some questions."

He knew what to ask, too; but Jack's first remark was not an answer.

"Your map's all wrong," said he. "There isn't sand and gravel in that hill across the Cocahutchie, beyond the bridge."

"What is there, then?" asked a gentleman, who seemed to be one of the civil engineers, pettishly. "I say it's earth and gravel, mainly."

"Clear granite," said Jack. "Go down stream a little and you'll see."

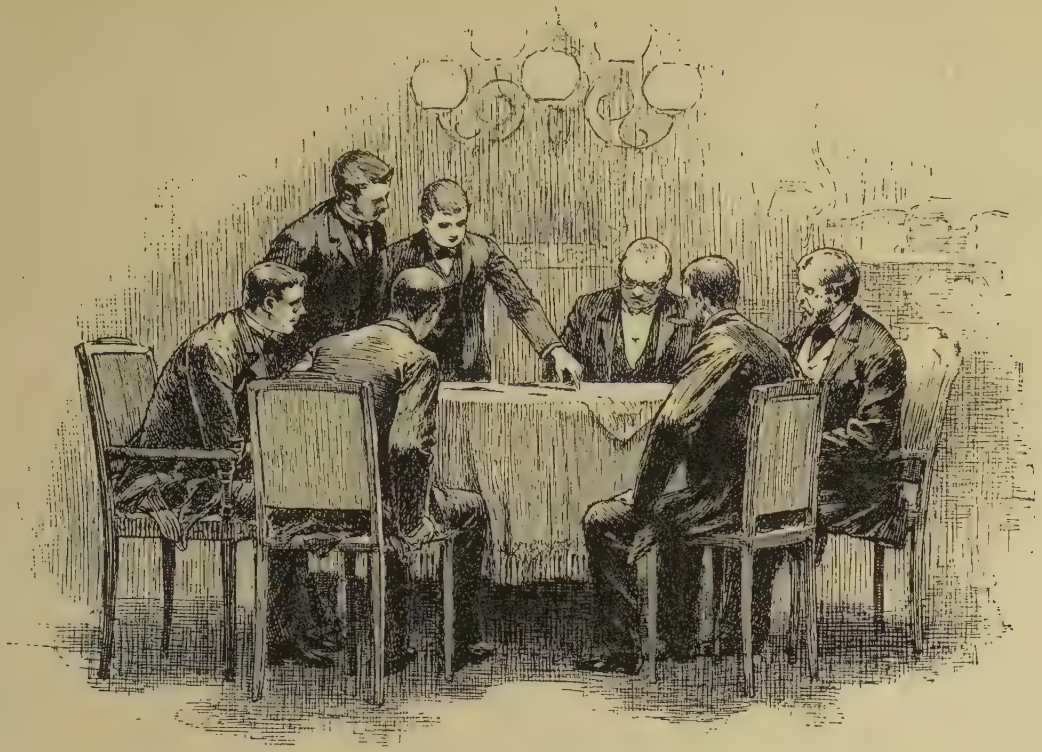
"All right," exclaimed Mr. Magruder; "it will be costly cutting it, but we shall want the stone. Go ahead now. You're just the man we needed."

Jack thought so before they got through, for he had to tell all there was to tell about the country, away down to Link's bridge.

"Look here," said one of them, quizzically. "Ogden, have you lived all your life in every house in Crofield and in Mertonville and everywhere? You know even the melon-patches and hen-roosts!"

"Well, I know some of 'em," said Jack, coloring and trying to join in the general laugh. "I wouldn't talk so much, but Mr. Magruder asked me to stay over and tell what you didn't know."

Then the laughter broke out again, and it was not at Jack's expense.



"Your map's all wrong," said Jack.

They had learned all they expected from him, however, and Mr. Magruder thanked him very heartily.

"I hope you'll have a good time to-morrow," he said. "Look at the city. I'll see that you have a ticket ready for the boat."

"I didn't expect—" began Jack.

"Nonsense, Ogden," said Mr. Magruder. "We owe you a great deal, my boy. I wouldn't have missed knowing about that granite ledge. It's worth something to us. The ticket will be handed you by the clerk. Good-evening, Jack Ogden. I hope I'll see you again, some day."

"I hope so," said Jack. "Good-evening, sir. Good-evening, gentlemen."

Out he walked, and as the door closed behind him the engineer remarked:

"He ought to be a railway contractor. Brightest young fellow I've seen in a long time."

Jack felt strange. The old, grown-up feeling seemed to have been questioned out of him, by those keen, peremptory, clear-headed business men, and he appeared to himself to be a very small, green, poor, uneducated boy, who hardly knew where he was going next, or what he was going to do when he got there. "I don't know about that either," he said to himself, when he reached the office. "I know I'm going to bed, next, and I believe that I'll go to sleep when I get there!"

Weary, very weary, and almost blue, in spite of everything, was Jack Ogden that night, when he crept into bed.

"'Tisn't like that old cot in the *Eagle* office," he thought. "I'm glad it isn't to be paid for out of my nine dollars."

Jack was tired all over, and in a few minutes he was sound asleep.

He had gone to bed quite early, and he awoke with the first sunshine that came pouring into his room.

"It isn't time to get up," he said. "It'll be ever so long before breakfast, but I can't stay here in bed."

As he put on his coat something swung against his side, and he said:

"There! I'd forgotten that pamphlet. I'll see what's in it."

The excitement of getting to the Delavan House, and the dinner and the talk afterward, had driven the pamphlet out of his mind until then, but he opened it eagerly.

"Good!" he said, as he turned the leaves. "Maps and pictures, all the way down. Everything about the Hudson. Pictures of all the places worth seeing in New York. Tells all about them. Where to go when you get there. Just what I wanted!"

Down he sat, and he came near forgetting his breakfast, so intensely was he absorbed by that guide-book. He shut it up, at last, however, remarking: "I'll have breakfast, and then I'll go out and see Albany. It's all I've got to do till the boat leaves this evening. First city I ever saw." He ate with all the more satisfaction because he knew that he was not eating up any part of his nine dollars, and it did not seem like so much money as it would have seemed in Cro-

field. He was in no haste, for he had no idea where to go, and did not mean to tell anybody how ignorant he was. He walked out of the Delavan House, and strolled away to the right. Even the poorer buildings were far better than anything in Crofield or Mertonville, and he soon had a bit of a surprise. He reached a corner where a very broad street opened, at the right, and went up a steep hill. It was not a very long street, and it ended at the crest of the hill, where there were some trees, and above them towered what seemed to be a magnificent palace of a building.

"I'll go and see that," said Jack. "I'll know what it is when I see the sign,—or I'll ask somebody."

His interest in that piece of architecture grew as he walked on up the hill; and he was a little warm and out of breath when he reached the street corner, at the top. Upon the corner, with his hands folded behind him and his hat pushed back on his head, stood a well-dressed man, somewhat above middle height, heavily built and portly, who seemed to be gazing at the same object.

"Mister," said Jack, "will you please tell me what that building is?"

"Certainly," replied the gentleman, turning to him with a bow and a smile. "That's the New York State Miracle; one of the wonders of the world."

"The State Miracle?" said Jack.

"What's your name?" asked the gentleman, with another bow and smile.

"Ogden,—Jack Ogden."

"Yes, Jack Ogden; thank you. My name's 'Guvner.' That's a miracle. It can never be finished. There's magic in it. Do you know what that is?"

"That's one of the things I don't know, Mr. Guvner," said Jack.

"I don't know what it is either," smiled Mr. Guvner. "When they built it they put in twenty tons of pure, solid gold, my lad. Didn't you ever hear of it? Where do you live when you're at home?"

"My home's in Crofield," said Jack, not aware of a group of gentlemen and ladies who were standing still, a few yards away, looking at them. "I'm on my way to New York, but I wanted to see Albany."

Mr. Guvner put a large hand on his shoulder, and smiled in his face.

"Jack, my son," he said, "go up and look all over the State Miracle. Many other States have other similar miracles. Don't stay in it too long, though."

"Is it unhealthy?" asked Jack, with a smile.

The portly gentleman was smiling also.

"No, no; not unhealthy, my boy; but they persuade some men to stay there a long time, and they're never the same men again. Come out as soon as you've had a good view of it."

"I'll take a look at it any way," said Jack, turning away. "Thank you, Mr. Guvner. I'll see the Miracle."

He had gone but a few paces, and the others were stepping forward, when he was called by Mr. Guvner.

"Jack, come back a moment!"

"What is it, Mr. Guvner?" asked Jack.

"I'm almost sorry you're going to the city. It's as bad as the Capitol itself. You'll never be the same man again. Don't get to be the wrong kind of man."

"I'll remember, Mr. Guvner," said Jack, and he walked away again; but as he did so he heard a lady laughing, and a solemn-faced gentlemen saying:

"Good morning, Gov-er-nor. A very fine morning?"

"I declare!" exclaimed Jack, with almost a shiver. "I've been talking with the Governor of the State himself, and I'm going to see the Capitol. I couldn't have done that in Crofield. And I'll be in New York City to-morrow!"

CHAPTER X.

THE STATE-HOUSE AND THE STEAMBOAT.

Mary Ogden had three dresses, one quite pretty, but none were of silk. Aunt Melinda was always telling Mary what she ought not to wear at her age, and with hair and eyes as dark as hers. Mary felt very proud, therefore, when she saw on the table in her room the parcel containing the black silk and trimmings.

"It must have been expensive," she said, and she unfolded it as if afraid it would break.

"What will mother say?" she thought. "And Aunt Melinda! I'm too young for it—I know I am!"

The whole Murdoch family arose early, and the editor, after looking at the black silk, said that he felt pretty well.

"So you ought," said his wife. "You had more new subscribers yesterday than you ever had before in your life in any one day."

"That makes me think," said Mr. Murdoch. "I owe Mary Ogden five dollars—there it is—for getting out that number of the *Eagle*."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Mary. "I did that, and Jack did it, only because—"

He put the bank-note into her hand.

"I'd rather you'd take it," he said. "You'll never be a good editor till you learn to work on a business basis."

As he insisted, she put the bill into her pocket-book, thanking him gratefully.

"I had two dollars when I came," she thought, "and I havn't spent a cent; but I may need something. Besides, I'll have to pay for making up my new dress."

But she was wrong. Mrs. Murdoch went out to see a neighbor after breakfast, and before noon it was certain that if seven old men of Mertonville had paid for the silk, at least seven elderly women could be found who were very willing to make it up.

About that time Jack was walking up to the door of the Senate Chamber, in the Capitol, at Albany, after having astonished himself by long walks and gazings through the halls and side passages.

"It's true enough," he said to himself. "The Governor's right. No fellow could go through this and come out just as he came in."

He understood about the "twenty tons of pure gold" in the building, but nevertheless he could not keep from looking all around after signs of it.

"There's plenty of gilding," he said, "but it's very thin. It's all finished, too. I don't see what more they could do, now the roof's on and it's all painted. He must have been joking when he said that."

Jack roamed all over the Capitol, for the Legislature was

not in session, and the building was open to sight-seers. There were many of them, and from visitors, workmen, and some boys whom he met, Jack managed to find out many interesting things.

The Assembly Chamber seemed to him a truly wonderful room, and upon the floor were several groups of people admiring it.

He saw one visitor seat himself in the Speaker's chair.

"There's room in that chair for two or three small men," said Jack; "I'll try it by and by."

So he did.

"The Speaker was a boy once, too, and so was the Governor," he said to himself aloud.

"Yes, my boy," said a lady, who was near enough to hear him; "so they were. So were all the presidents, and some went barefoot and lived in log-cabins."

"Well, I've often gone barefoot," said Jack, laughing.

"Many boys go barefoot, but they can't all become governors," she said, pleasantly.

She looked at Jack for a moment, and then said with a smile, "You look like a bright young man, though. Do you suppose you could ever be Governor?"

"Perhaps I could," he said. "It can't be harder to learn than any other business."

The lady laughed, and her friends laughed, and Jack arose from the Speaker's chair and walked away.

He had seen enough of that vast State House. It wearied him, there was so much of it, and it was so fine.

"To build this house cost twenty tons of gold!" he said, as he went out through the lofty doorway. "I wish I had some of it. I've kept my nine dollars yet, anyway. The Governor's right. I don't know what he meant, but I'll never be just the same fellow again."

It was so. But it was not merely seeing the Capitol that had changed him. He was changing from a boy who had never seen anything outside of Crofield and Mertonville, into a boy who was walking right out into the world to learn what is in it.

"I'll go to the hotel and write to father and mother," he said; "and I have something to tell them."

It was the first real letter he had ever written, and it seemed a great thing to do—ten times more important than writing a composition, and almost equal to editing the *Eagle*.

"I'll just put in everything," he thought, "just as it came along, and they'll know what I've been doing."

It took a long time to write the letter, but it was done at last, and when he put down his pen he exclaimed:

"Hard work always makes me hungry! I wonder if it isn't dinner-time? They said it was always dinner-time here after twelve o'clock. I'll go see." It was long after twelve when he went down to the office to stamp and mail his letter.

"Mr. Ogden," said the clerk, giving Jack an envelope, "here's a note from Mr. Magruder. He left—"

"Ogden," said a deep, full voice just behind him, "didn't you stay there too long? I am told you sat in the Speaker's chair."

Jack wheeled about, blushing crimson. The Governor was not standing still, but was walking steadily through the office, surrounded by a group of dignified men. It was necessary to walk with them in order to reply to the question, and Jack did so.

"I sat there half a minute," he answered. "I hope it didn't hurt me."

"I'm glad you got out so soon, Jack," replied the Governor approvingly.

"But I heard also that you think of learning the Governor business," went on the great man. Now, don't you do it. It is not large pay, and you'd be out of work most of the time. Be a blacksmith, or a carpenter, or a tailor, or a printer."

"Well, Governor," said Jack, "I was brought up a blacksmith; and I've worked at carpentering, and printing too; and I've edited a newspaper; but—"

There he was cut short by the laughter from those dignified men.

"Good-bye, Jack," said the Governor, shaking hands with him. "I hope you'll have a good time in the city. You'll be sent back to the Capitol some day, perhaps."

Jack returned to the clerk's counter to mail his letter, and found that gentleman looking at him as if he wondered what sort of a boy he might be.

"That young fellow knows all the politicians," said the clerk to one of the hotel proprietors. "He can't be so countrified as he looks."

After dinner, Jack returned to his room for a long look at the guide-book. He went through it rapidly to the last leaf, and then threw it down, remarking:

The hotel clerk looked at Jack.

"I never was so tired! I'll take a walk around and see Albany a little more; and I'll not be sorry when the boat goes. I'd like to see Mary and the rest for an hour or two. I think they'd like to see me coming in, too."

Jack sauntered on through street after street, getting a clearer idea of what a city was.

He walked so far that he had some difficulty in returning to the hotel, but finally he found it without asking directions.

Soon after, Jack brought down his satchel, said good-bye to the very polite clerk, and walked out.

He had learned the way to the steamboat-wharf; and he had already taken one brief look at the river and the railway bridge.

"There's the 'Columbia,'" he said, aloud, as he turned a street corner and came in sight of her. "What a boat! Why, if her nose was at the Main Street corner, by the Washington Hotel, her rudder would be half-way across the Cocahutchie!"

He walked the wharf, staring at her from end to end, before he went on board. He had put Mr. Magruder's note into his pocket without reading it.

"I won't open it here," he had said then. "There's nothing in it but a ticket."

He found, however, that he must show the ticket at the gangway, and so he opened the envelope.

"Three tickets?" he said. "And two are in one piece. This one is for a stateroom. That's the bunk I'm to sleep in. Hulloo! Supper ticket! I have supper on board the steamer, do I? Well, I'm not sorry. I'll have to hurry, too. It's about time for her to start."

Jack went on board, and soon was hunting for his stateroom, almost bewildered by the rushing crowd in the great saloon.

He had his key, and knew the number, but it seemed that there were about a thousand of the little doors.

"One hundred and seventy-six is mine," he said; "and I'm going to put away my satchel and go on deck and see the river. Here it is at last. Why, it's a kind of little bedroom! It's as good as a floating hotel. Now I'm all right."

Suddenly he was aware, with a great thrill of pleasure, that the Columbia was in motion. He left his satchel in a corner, locked the door of the stateroom behind him, and set out to find his way to the deck. He went down-stairs and up-stairs, ran against people, and was run against by them; and it occurred to him that all the passengers were hunting for something they could not find.

"Looking for staterooms, I guess," he remarked aloud; but he himself should not have been staring behind him, for at that moment he felt the whack of a collision, and a pair of heavy arms grasped him.

"What you looks vor yourself, poy? You knocks my breath out! You find somebody you looks vor—eh?"

The tremendous man who held him was not tall, but very heavy, and had a broad face and long black beard and shaggy gray eyebrows.

"Beg pardon!" exclaimed Jack, with a glance at a lady holding one of the man's long arms, and at two other ladies following them.

"You vas got your stateroom?" asked his round-faced captor good-humoredly.

"Oh, yes!" said Jack. "I've got one."

"You haf luck. Dell you vot, poy, it ees a beeg schvindle. Dey say 'passage feefty cent,' und you comes aboard, und you find it is choost so. Dot's von passage. Den it ees von dollar more to go in to supper, und von dollar to eat some tings, und von dollar to come out of supper, und some more dollars to go to sleep, und maybe dey sharges you more dollars to vake up in de morning. Dot is not all. Dey haf no more shtateroom left, und ve all got to zeet up all night. Eh? How you like dot, poy?"

Jack replied as politely as he knew how:

"Oh, you will find a stateroom. They can't be full."

"Dey *ees* full. Dey ees more as full. Dere vill be no room to sleep on de floor, und ve haf to shtand oop all night. How you likes dot, eh?"

The ladies looked genuinely distressed, and said a number of things to each other in some tongue that Jack did not understand. He had been proud enough of his stateroom up to that moment, but he felt his heart melting. Besides, he had intended to sit up a long while to see the river.

"I can fix it," he suddenly exclaimed. "Let the ladies take my stateroom. It's big enough."

"Poy!" said the German solemnly, "dot is vot you run into my arms for. My name is Guilderaufenberg. Dis lady ees Mrs. Guilderaufenberg. Dis ees Mees Hildebrand. She's Mees Poogmistchgski, and she is a Bolish lady vis my wife."

Jack caught all the names but the last, but he was not half sure about that. He bowed to each.

"Come with me; I'll show you the room," he said. "Then I'm going out on deck."

"Ve comes," said the wide German; and the three ladies all tried to express their thanks at the same time, as Jack led the way. Jack was proud of his success in actually finding his own door again.

"I puts um all een," said Mr. Guilderaufenberg; "den I valks mit you on deck. Dose vommens belifs you vas a fine poy. So you vas, ven I dells de troof."

They all talked a great deal, and Jack managed to reduce the Polish lady's name to Miss "Podgoomski," but he felt uneasily that he had left out a part of it. Mrs. Guilderaufenberg and the others were loaded up with more parcels and baggage than Jack had ever seen three women carry.

"Dey dakes care of dot shtateroom," said his friend. "Ve goes on deck. I bitty anypoddy vot dries to get dot shtateroom avay from Mrs. Guilderaufenberg and Mees Hildebrand and Mees Pod——ski;" but again Jack had failed to hear that Polish lady's name.

CHAPTER XI.

DOWN THE HUDSON.

Jack already felt well acquainted with Mr. Guilderaufenberg.

The broad and bearded German knew all about steamboats, and found his way out upon the forward deck without any difficulty. Jack had lost his way entirely in his first hunting for that spot, and he was glad to find himself under the awning and gazing down the river.

"Ve only shtays here a leetle vile," said his friend. "Den ve goes and takes de ladies down to eat some supper. Vas you hongry?"

Jack was not really hungry for anything but the Hudson, but he said he would gladly join the supper-party.

"I never saw the Hudson before," he said. "I'd rather sit up than not."

"I seet up all de vay to New York and not care," said his friend. "I seet up a great deal. My vife, dot ees Mrs. Guilderaufenberg, she keep a beeg boarding-house in Vashington. Dot ees de ceety to lif in! Vas you ever in Vashington? No?"

"Never was anywhere," said Jack. "Never was in New York—"

"You nefer vas dere? Den you petter goes mit me und Mrs. Guilderaufenberg. Dot ees goot. So! You nefer vas in Vashington. You nefer vas in New York. So! Den you nefer vas in Lonton? I vas dere. You lose youself in Lonton so easy. I lose myself twice vile I vas dere."

"You weren't lost long, I know," said Jack, laughing at the droll shake of the German's head.

"No, I vas find. I vas shoost going to advertise myself ven I finds a street I remember. Den I gets to my hotel. You nefer vas dere? Und you nefer vas in Vashington. You come some day. Dot ees de ceety, mit de Capitol und de great men! Und you vas nefer in Paris, nor in Berlin, nor in Vienna, nor in Amsterdam? No? I haf all of dem seen, und dose oder cities. I dravel, but dere ees doo much boleece, so I comes to dis country, vere dere ees few boleece."

Jack was startled for a moment. The bland, good-humored face of his German acquaintance had suddenly changed. His white teeth showed through his mushtaches, and his beard seemed to wave and curl as he spoke of the police. For one moment Jack thought of Deacon Abram and Mrs. McNamara, of the dark room and the ropes and the window.

"He may not have done anything," he said to himself, aloud, "any more than I did; and they were after me."

"Dot ees not so!" Mr. Guilderaufenberg growled. "I dell dem de troof too mosh. Den I vas a volf, a vild peest, dot mus' be hoonted, und dey hoonted me; put I got avay.

I vas in St. Beetersburg, vonce, vile dey hoont somevere else. Den I vas in Constantinople, mit de Turks—"

Jack's brain was in a whirl. He had read about all of those cities, and here was a man who had really been in them. It was even more wonderful than talking with the Governor or looking at the Hudson.

But in a moment his new friend's face assumed a quieter expression.

"Come along," he said. "De ladies ees ready by dees time. Ve goes. Den I dells you some dings you nefer hear."

He seemed to know all about the Columbia, for he led Jack straight to the stateroom door, through all the crowds of passengers.

"I might not have found it in less than an hour," said Jack to himself. They're waiting for us. I can't talk with them much."

But he found out that Mrs. Guilderaufenberg spoke English with but little accent, Miss Hildebrand only knocked over a letter here and there, and the Polish lady's fluent English astonished him so much that he complimented her upon it.

"Dot ees so," remarked Mr. Guilderaufenberg. "She talks dem all so vell dey say she vas born dere. Dell you vat, my poy, ven you talks Bolish or Russian, den you vas exercise your tongue so you shpeaks all de oder lankwitches easy."

The ladies were in good humor, and disposed to laugh at anything, especially after they reached the supper-room; and

Mrs. Guilderaufenberg at once took a strong interest in Jack because he had never been anywhere.

For convenience, perhaps, the ladies frequently spoke to one another in German, but Jack, without understanding a word of it, listened earnestly to what they were saying.

They often, however, talked in English, and to him, and he learned that they had been making a summer-vacation trip through Canada, and were now on their way home. It was evident that Mr. Guilderaufenberg was a man who did not lack money, and that none of the others were poor. Besides hearing them, Jack was busy in looking around the long, glittering supper-room of the Columbia, noticing how many different kinds of people there were in it. They seemed to be of all nations, ages, colors, and kinds, and Jack would not have missed the sight for anything.

"I'm beginning to see the world," he said to himself, and then he had to reply to Mrs. Guilderaufenberg for about the twentieth time:

"Oh, not at all. You're welcome to the stateroom. I'd rather sit up and look at the river than go to bed."

"Den, Mr. Ogden," she said, "you comes to Vashington, and you comes to my house. I can den repay your kindness. You vill see senators, congressmen, generals, fine men—great men, in Vashington."

After supper the party found seats under the awning forward, and for a while Jack's eyes were so busy with the beauties of the Hudson that his ears heard little.

The moonlight was very bright and clear, and showed

the shores plainly. Jack found his memory of the guide-book was excellent. The villages and towns along the shores were so many collections of twinkling, changing glimmers, and between them lay long reaches of moonshine and shadow.

"I'd like to write home about it," thought Jack, "but I couldn't begin to tell 'em how it looks."

Jack was not sorry when the three ladies said good-night. He had never before been so long upon his careful good behavior in one evening, and it made him feel constrained, till he almost wished he was back in Crofield.

"Mr. Guilderaufenberg," he said as soon as they were alone, "this is the first big river I ever saw."

"So?" said the German. "Den I beats you. I see goot many rifers, ven I drafels. Dell you vat, poy; verefer dere vas big rifers, anyvere, dere vas mosh fighting. Some leetle rifer do choost as vell, sometimes, but de beeg rifers vas alvays battlefields."

"Not the Hudson?" said Jack inquiringly.

"You ees American poy," said the German; "you should know de heestory of your country. Up to Vest Point, de Hudson vas full of fights. All along shore, too. I vas on de Mississippi, and it is fights all de vay down to his mout'. So mit some oder American rifers, but de vorst of all is the Potomac, by Vashington. Eet ees not so fine as de Hudson, but eet is battle-grounds all along shore. I vas on de Danube, and eet ees vorse for fights dan de Potomac. I see so many oder rifers, all ofer, eferyvere, but de fighting rifer of de vorld is de Rhine. It is so fine as de Hudson, and eet ees

even better looking by day.—Ve gets into de Caatskeel Mountains now. Look at dem by dis moonlight, and you ees like on de Rhine. You see de Rhine some day, and ven you comes to Vashington you see de Potomac."

On, on, steamed the Columbia, with what almost seemed a slow motion, it was so ponderous, dignified, and stately, while the moonlit heights and hollows rolled by on either hand. On, at the same time, went Mr. Guilderaufenberg with his stories of rivers and cities and countries that he had seen, and of battles fought along rivers and across them. Then, suddenly, the gruff voice grew deep and savage, like the growl of an angry bear, and he exclaimed:

"I haf seen some men, too, of de kind I run avay from—"

"Policemen?" said Jack.

"Yah; dat is de name I gif dem," growled the angry German. "De Tsar of Russia, I vas see him, and he vas noding but a chief of boleece. De old Kaiser of Germany, he vas a goot man, but he vas too mosh chief of bolecce. So vas de Emperor of Austria; I vas see him. So vas de Sultan of Turkey, but he vas more a humpug dan anyting else. Dere ees leetle boleece in Turkey. I see de Emperor Napoleon before he toomble down. He vas noding but a boleeceman. I vas so vild glad ven he comes down. De leetle kings, I care not so mosh for. You comes to Vashington, and I show you some leetle kings—" and Mr. Guilderaufenberg grew good-humored and began to laugh.

"What kind of kings?" asked Jack.

"Leetle congressman dot is choost come de first time, und leetle beeg man choost put into office. Dey got ofer it bretty soon, und de fun is gone."

His traveler friend was sound asleep.

There was a long silence after that. The broad German sat in an arm-chair, and pretty soon he slipped forward a little with his knees very near the network below the rail of the Columbia. Then Jack heard a snore, and knew that his traveler friend was sound asleep.

"I wish I had a chair to sleep on, instead of this camp-stool," thought Jack. "I'll have a look all around the boat and come back."

It took a long while to see the boat, and the first thing he discovered was that a great many people had failed to secure staterooms or berths. They sat in chairs, and they lounged on sofas, and they were curled up on the floor; for the Columbia had received a flood of tourists who were going home, and a large part of the passengers of another boat that had been detained on account of an accident at Albany; so the steamer was decidedly overcrowded.

"There are more people aboard," thought Jack, "than would make two such villages as Crofield, unless you should count in the farms and farmers. I'm glad I came, if it's only to know what a steamboat is. I haven't spent a cent of my nine dollars yet, either."

Here and there he wandered, until he came out at the stern, and had a look at the foaming wake of the boat, and at the river and the heights behind, and at the grand spectacle of another great steamboat, full of lights, on her way up the river. He had seen any number of smaller boats, and of white-sailed sloops and schooners, and now, along the eastern bank, he heard and saw the whizzing rush of several railway trains.

"I'd rather be here," he thought. "The people there can't see half so much as I can."

Not one of them, moreover, had been traveling all over the world with Mr. Guilderaufenberg, and hearing and thinking about kings and their "police."

Getting back to his old place was easier, now that he began to understand the plan of the Columbia; but, when Jack returned, his camp-stool was gone, and he had to sit down on the bare deck or to stand up. He did both, by turns, and he was beginning to feel very weary of sight-seeing, and to wish that he were sound asleep, or that to-morrow had come.

"It's a warm night," he said to himself, "and it isn't so very dark, even now the moon has gone down. Why—it's getting lighter! Is it morning? Can we be so near the city as that?"

There was a growing rose-tint upon a few clouds in the western sky, as the sun began to look at them from below the range of heights, eastward, but the sun had not yet risen.

Jack was all but breathless. He walked as far forward as he could go, and forgot all about being sleepy or tired.

"There," he said, after a little, "those must be the Palisades."

Out came his guide-book, and he tried to fit names to the places along shore.

"More sailing-vessels," he said, "and there goes another train. We must be almost there."

He was right, and he was all one tingle of excitement as the Columbia swept steadily on down the widening river.

There came a pressure of a hand upon his shoulder.

"Goot-morning, my poy. De city ees coming. How you feels?"

"First-rate," said Jack. "It won't be long, now, will it?"

"You wait a leetle. I sleep some. It vas a goot varm

night. De varmest night I efer had vas in Egypt, and de coldest vas in Moscow. De shtove it went out, and ve vas cold, I dell you, dill dot shtove vas kindle up again! Dere vas dwenty-two peoples in dot room, and dot safe us. Ve keep von another varm. Dot ees de trouble mit Russia. De finest vedder in all the vorlt is een America,—and dere ees more vedder of all kinds."

On, on, and now Jack's blood tingled more sharply, to his very fingers and toes, for they swept beyond Spuyten Duyvil Creek, which his friend pointed out, and the city began to make its appearance.

"It's on both sides," said Jack. "No, that's New Jersey"—and he read the names on that side from his guidebook.

Masts, wharves, buildings, and beyond them spires, and—and Jack grew dizzy trying to think of that endless wilderness of streets and houses. He heard what Mr. Guilderaufenberg said about the islands in the harbor, the forts, the ferries, and yet he did not hear it plainly, because it was too much to take in all at once.

"Now I brings de ladies," said Mr. Guilderaufenberg, "an' ve eats breakfast, ven ve all gets to de Hotel Dantzic. Come!"

Jack took one long, sweeping look at the city, so grand and so beautiful under the newly risen sun, and followed.

At that same hour a dark-haired girl sat by an open window in the village of Mertonville. She had arisen and

dressed herself, early as it was, and she held in her hand a postal-card, which had arrived for her from Albany the night before.

"By this time," she said, "Jack is in the city. Oh, how I wish I were with him!"

She was silent after that, but she had hardly said it before one of two small boys, who had been pounding one another with pillows in a very small bedroom in Crofield, suddenly threw his pillow at the other, and exclaimed:

"I s'pose Jack's there by this time, Jimmy!"

CHAPTER XII.

IN A NEW WORLD.

Jack Ogden stood like a boy in a dream, as the "Columbia" swept gracefully into her dock and was made fast. Her swing about was helped by the outgoing tide, that foamed and swirled around the projecting piers.

A hurrying crowd of people was thronging out of the "Columbia," but Jack's German friend did not join them.

"De ceety vill not roon avay," he said, calmly. "You comes mit me."

They went to the cabin for the ladies, and Jack noticed how much baggage the rest were carrying. He took a satchel from Miss Hildebrand, and then the Polish lady, with a grateful smile, allowed him to take another.

"Dose crowds ees gone," remarked Mr. Guilderaufenberg. "Ve haf our chances now."

Afterward, Jack had a confused memory of walking over a wide gang-plank that led into a babel. Miss Hildebrand held him by his left arm while the two other ladies went with Mr. Guilderaufenberg. They came out into a street, between two files of men who shook their whips, shouted, and pointed at a line of carriages. Miss Hildebrand told

Jack that they could reach their hotel sooner by the elevated railway.

"He look pale," she thought, considerately. "He did not sleep all night. He never before travel on a steamboat!"

Jack meanwhile had a new sensation.

"This is the city!" he was saying to himself. "I'm really here. There are no crowds, because it's Sunday,—but then!"

After walking a few minutes they came to a corner, where Mr. Guilderaufenberg turned and said to Jack:

"Dees ees Proadvay. Dere ees no oder street in de vorlt dat ees so long. Look dees vay und den look dat vay! So! Eh? Dot ees Proadvay. Dere ees no oder city in de vorlt vere a beeg street keep Soonday!"

It was indeed a wonderful street to the boy from Crofield, and he felt the wonder of it; and he felt the wonder of the Sunday quiet and of the closed places of business.

"There's a policeman," he remarked to Mr. Guilderaufenberg.

"So!" said the German, smiling; "but he ees a beople's boleeceman. Eef he vas a king's boleeceman, I vas not here. I roon avay, or I vas lock up. Jack, ven you haf dodge some king's boleecemen, like me, you vish you vas American, choost like me now, und vas safe!"

"I believe I should," said Jack, politely; but his head was not still for an instant. His eyes and his thoughts were busily at work. He had expected to see tall and splendid buildings, and had even dreamed of them. How he had

On Broadway, at last!

longed and hoped and planned to get to this very place! He had seen pictures of the city, but the reality was nevertheless a delightful surprise.

Miss Hildebrand pointed out Trinity Church, and afterward St. Paul's.

"Maybe I'll go to one of those big churches, to-day," said Jack.

"Oh, no," said Miss Hildebrand. "You find plenty churches up-town. Not come back so far."

"I shall know where these are, any way," Jack replied.

After a short walk they came to City Hall Square.

"There!" Jack exclaimed. "I know this place! It's just like the pictures in my guide-book. There's the Post-office, the City Hall,—everything!"

"Come," said Mr. Guilderaufenberg, beginning to cross the street. "Ve must go ofer und take de elevated railvay."

"Come along, Meester Jack Ogden," added Mrs. Guilderaufenberg.

"There are enough people here now," said Jack, as they walked along—"Sunday or no Sunday!"

"Of course," said Miss Hildebrand, pointing with a hand that lifted a small satchel. "That's the elevated railway station over there, across both streets. There, too, is where you go to the suspension bridge to Brooklyn, over the East River. You see, when we go by. You see to-morrow. Not much, now. I am so hungry!"

"I want to see everything," said Jack; "but I'm hungry, too. Why, we're going upstairs!"

In a minute more Jack was sitting by an open window of an elevated railway car. This was another entirely new experience, and Jack found it hard to rid himself of the notion

that possibly the whole long-legged railway might tumble down, or the train suddenly shoot off from the track and drop into the street.

"Dees ees bretty moch American," said Mr. Guilderaufenberg, as Jack stared out at the third-story windows of the buildings. "You nefer vas here before? So! Den you nefer feels again choost like now. You ees fery moch a poy. I dell you, dere is not soch railvays in Europe; I vonce feel like you now. Dot vas ven I first come here. It vas not Soonday; it vas a day for de flags. I dell you vat it ees: ven dot American feels goot, he hang out hees flag. Shtars und shtripes—I like dot flag! I look at some boleece, und den I like dot flag again, for dey vas not hoont, hoont, hoont, for poor Fritz von Guilderaufenberg, for dot he talk too moch!"

"It's pretty quiet all along. All the stores seem to be closed," said Jack, looking down at the street below.

"Eet ees so shtill!" remarked Mr. Guilderaufenberg. "I drafel de vorlt ofer und I find not dees Soonday. In Europe, it vas not dere to keep. I dell you, ven dere ees no more Soonday, den dere ees no more America! So! Choost you remember dot, my poy, from a man dot vas hoonted all ofer Europe!"

Jack was quite ready to believe Mr. Guilderaufenberg. He had been used to even greater quiet, in Crofield, for after all there seemed to be a great deal going on.

The train they were in made frequent stops, and it did not seem long to Jack before Mrs. Guilderaufenberg and the

other ladies got up and began to gather their parcels and satchels. Jack was ready when his friends led the way to the door.

"I'll be glad to get off," he thought. "I am afraid Aunt Melinda would say I was traveling on Sunday."

The conductor threw open the car door and shouted, and Mr. Guilderaufenberg hurried forward exclaiming: "Come! Dees ees our station!"

Jack had taken even more than his share of the luggage; and now his arm was once more grasped by Miss Hildebrand.

"I'll take good care of her," he said to himself, as she pushed along out of the cars. "All I need to do is to follow the rest."

He did not understand what she said to the others in German, but it was: "I'll bring Mr. Ogden. He will know how to look out for himself, very soon."

She meant to see him safely to the Hotel Dantzic, that morning; and the next thing Jack knew he was going down a long flight of stairs, to the sidewalk, while Miss Hildebrand was explaining that part of the city they were in. Even while she was talking, and while he was looking in all directions, she wheeled him suddenly to the left, and they came to a halt.

"Hotel Dantzic," read Jack aloud, from the sign. "It's a tall building; but it's very thin."

The ladies went into the waiting-room, while Jack followed Mr. Guilderaufenberg into the office .The German

was welcomed by the proprietor as if he were an old acquaintance.

A moment afterward, Mr. Guilderaufenberg turned away from the desk and said to Jack:

"My poy, I haf a room for you. Eet ees high oop, but eet ees goot; und you bays only feefty cent a day. You bay for von veek, now. You puys vot you eats vere you blease in de ceety."

The three dollars and a half paid for the first week made the first break in Jack's capital of nine dollars.

"Any way," he thought, when he paid it, "I have found a place to sleep in. Money 'll go fast in the city, and I must look out. I'll put my baggage in my room and then come down to breakfast."

"You breakfast mit us dees time," said Mr. Guilderaufenberg, kindly. "Den you not see us more, maybe, till you comes to Vashington."

Jack got his key and the number of his room and was making his way to the foot of a stairway when a very polite man said to him:

"This way, sir. This way to the elevator. Seventh floor, sir."

Jack had heard and read of elevators, but it was startling to ride in one for the first time. It was all but full when he got in, and after it started, his first thought was:

"How it's loaded! What if the rope should break!"

It stopped to let a man out, and started and stopped again and again, but it seemed only a few long, breathless

moments before the man in charge of it said: "Seventh, sir!"

The moment Jack was in his room he exclaimed:

"Isn't this grand, though? It's only about twice as big as that stateroom on the steamboat. I can feel at home here."

It was a pleasant little room, and Jack began at once to make ready for breakfast.

He was brushing his hair when he went to the window, and as he looked out he actually dropped the brush in his surprise.

"Where's my guide-book?" he said. "I know where I am, though. That must be the East River. Away off there is Long Island. Looks as if it was all city. Maybe that is Brooklyn,—I don't know. Isn't this a high house? I can look down on all the other roofs. Jingo!"

He hurried through his toilet, meanwhile taking swift glances out of the window. When he went out to the elevator, he said to himself:

"I'll go down by the stairs some day, just to see how it seems. A storm would whistle like anything, round the top of this building!"

When he got down, Mr. Guilderaufenberg was waiting for him, and the party of ladies went in to breakfast, in a restaurant which occupied nearly all of the lower floor of the hotel.

"I understand," said Jack, good-humoredly, in reply to an explanation from Miss Hildebrand. "You pay for just what you order, and no more, and they charge high for

everything but bread. I'm beginning to learn something of city ways."

During all that morning, anybody who knew Jack Ogden would have had to look at him twice, he had been so quiet and sedate; but the old, self-confident look gradually returned during breakfast.

"Ve see you again at supper," said Mr. Guilderaufenberg, as they arose. "Den ve goes to Vashington. You valks out und looks about. You easy finds your vay back. Goot-bye till den."

Jack shook hands with his friends, and walked out into the street.

"Well, here I am!" he thought. "This is the city. I'm all alone in it, too, and I must find my own way. I can do it, though. I'm glad it's Sunday, so that I needn't go straight to work."

At that moment, the nine o'clock bells were ringing in two wooden steeples in the village of Crofield; but the bell of the third steeple was silent, down among the splinters of what had been the pulpit of its own meeting-house. The village was very still, but there was something peculiar in the quiet in the Ogden homestead. Even the children went about as if they missed something or were listening for somebody they expected.

There were nine o'clock bells, also, in Mertonville, and there was a ring at the door-bell of the house of Mr. Murdoch, the editor.

"Why, Elder Holloway!" exclaimed Mrs. Murdoch, when she opened the door. "Please to walk in."

"Thank you, Mrs. Murdoch, but I can't," he said, speaking as if hurried. "Please tell Miss Ogden there's a class of sixteen girls in our Sunday-school, and the teacher's gone; and I've taken the liberty of promising for her that she'll take charge of it."

"I'll call her," said Mrs. Murdoch.

"No, no," replied the elder. "Just tell her it's a nice class, and that the girls expect her to come, and we'll be ever so much obliged to her. Good-morning!"—and he was gone.

"Oh, Mrs. Murdoch!" exclaimed Mary, when the elder's message was given. "I can't! I don't know them! I suppose I ought; but I'd have said no, if I had seen him."

The elder had thought of that, perhaps, and had provided against any refusal by retreating. As he went away he said to himself:

"She can do it, I know; if she does, it'll help me carry out my plan."

He looked, just then, as if it were a very good plan, but he did not reveal it.

Mary Ogden persuaded Mrs. Murdoch to take her to another church that morning, so that she need not meet any of her new class.

"I hope Jack will go to church in the city," she said; and her mother said the same thing to Aunt Melinda over in Crofield.

Jack could not have given any reason why his feet turned westward, but he went slowly along for several blocks, while he stared at the rows of buildings, at the sidewalks, at the pavements, and at everything else, great and small. He was actually leaving the world in which he had been brought up—the Crofield world—and taking a first stroll around in a world of quite another sort. He met some people on the streets, but not many.

"They're all getting ready for church," he thought, and his next thought was expressed aloud.

"Whew! what street's this, I wonder?"

He had passed row after row of fine buildings, but suddenly he had turned into a wide avenue which seemed a street of palaces. Forward he went, faster and faster, staring eagerly at one after another of those elegant mansions of stone, of marble, or of brick.

"See here, Johnny," he suddenly heard in a sharp voice close to him, "what number do you want?"

"Hallo," said Jack, halting and turning. What street's this?"

He was looking up into the good-natured face of a tall man in a neat blue uniform.

"What are you looking for?" began the policeman again. But, without waiting for Jack's answer, he went on, "Oh, I see! You're a greeny lookin' at Fifth Avenue. Mind where you're going, or you'll run into somebody!"

"Is this Fifth Avenue?" Jack asked. "I wish I knew who owned these houses."

"You do, do you?" laughed the man in blue. "Well, I can tell you some of them. That house belongs to—" and the policeman went on giving name after name, and pointing out the finest houses.

Some of the names were familiar to Jack. He had read about these men in newspapers, and it was pleasant to see where they lived.

"See that house?" asked the policeman, pointing at one of the finest residences. "Well, the man that owns it came to New York as poor as you, maybe poorer. Not quite so green, of course! But you'll soon get over that. See that big house yonder, on the corner? Well, the cash for that was gathered by a chap who began as a deck-hand. Most of the big guns came up from nearly nothing. Now you walk along and look out; but mind you don't run over anybody."

"Much obliged," said Jack, and as he walked on, he kept his eyes open, but his thoughts were busy with what the policeman had told him.

That was the very idea he had while he was in Crofield. That was what had made him long to break away from the village and find his way to the city. His imagination had busied itself with stories of poor boys,—as poor and green as he, scores of them,—born and brought up in country homes, who, refusing to stay at home and be nobodies, had become successful men. All the great buildings he saw seemed to tell the same story. Still he did say to himself once:

"Some of their fathers must have been rich enough to give them a good start. Some were born rich, too. I don't

care for that, though. I don't know as I want so big a house. I am going to get along somehow. My chances are as good as some of these fellows had."

Just then he came to a halt, for right ahead of him were open grounds, and beyond were grass and trees. To the right and left were buildings.

"I know what this is!" exclaimed Jack. "It must be Central Park. Some day I'm going there, all over it. But I'll turn around now, and find a place to go to church. I've passed a dozen churches on the way."

CHAPTER XIII.

A WONDERFUL SUNDAY.

When Jack turned away from the entrance to Central Park, he found much of the Sunday quiet gone. It was nearly half-past ten o'clock; the sidewalks were covered with people, and the street resounded with the rattle of carriage-wheels.

There was some uneasiness in the mind of the boy from Crofield. The policeman had impressed upon Jack the idea that he was not at home in the city, and that he did not seem at home there. He did not know one church from another, and part of his uneasiness was about how city people managed their churches. Perhaps they sold tickets, he thought; or perhaps you paid at the door; or possibly it didn't cost anything, as in Crofield.

"I'll ask," he decided, as he paused in front of what seemed to him a very imposing church. He stood still, for a moment, as the steady procession passed him, part of it going by, but much of it turning into the church.

"Mister —," he said bashfully to four well-dressed men in quick succession; but not one of them paused to answer him. Two did not so much as look at him, and the glances

given him by the other two made his cheeks burn—he hardly knew why.

"There's a man I'll try," thought Jack. "I'm getting mad!" The man of whom Jack spoke came up the street. He seemed an unlikely subject. He was so straight he almost leaned backward; he was rather slender than thin; and was uncommonly well dressed. In fact, Jack said to himself: "He looks as if he had bought the meeting-house, and was not pleased with his bargain."

Proud, even haughty, as was the manner of the stranger, Jack stepped boldly forward and again said:

"Mister?"

"Well, my boy, what is it?"

The response came with a halt and almost a bow.

"If a fellow wished to go to this church, how would he get in?" asked Jack.

"Do you live in the city?" There was a frown of stern inquiry on the broad forehead; but the head was bending farther forward.

"No," said Jack, "I live in Crofield."

"Where's that?"

"Away up on the Cocahutchie River. I came here early this morning."

"What's your name?"

"John Ogden."

"Come with me, John Ogden. You may have a seat in my pew. Come."

Into the church and up the middle aisle Jack followed

his leader, with a sense of awe almost stifling him; then, too, he felt drowned in the thunderous flood of music from the

"How would he get in?"

organ. He saw the man stop, open a pew-door, step back, smile and bow, and then wait until the boy from Crofield had passed in and taken his seat.

"He's a gentleman," thought Jack, hardly aware that he himself had bowed low as he went in, and that a smile of grim approval had followed him.

In the pew behind them sat another man, as haughty looking, but just now wearing the same kind of smile as he leaned forward and asked in an audible whisper:

"General, who's your friend?"

"Mr. John Ogden, of Crofield, away up on the Cooky-hutchie River. I netted him at the door," was the reply, in the same tone.

"Good catch?" asked the other.

"Just as good as I was, Judge, forty years ago. I'll tell you how that was some day."

"Decidedly raw material, I should say."

"Well, so was I. I was no more knowing than he is. I remember what it is to be far away from home."

The hoarse, subdued whispers ceased; the two gentlemen looked grim and severe again. Then there was a grand burst of music from the organ, the vast congregation stood up, and Jack rose with them.

He felt solemn enough, there was no doubt of that; but what he said to himself unconsciously took this shape:

"Jingo! If this isn't the greatest going to church *I* ever did! Hear that voice! The organ too—what music! Don't I wish Molly was here! I wish all the family were here."

The service went on and Jack listened attentively, in spite of a strong tendency in his eyes to wander among the

pillars to the galleries, up into the lofty vault above him, or around among the pews full of people. He knew it was a good sermon and that the music was good, singing and all—especially when the congregation joined in "Old Hundred" and another old hymn that he knew. Still he had an increasing sense of being a very small fellow in a very large place. When he raised his head, after the benediction, he saw the owner of the pew turn toward him, bow low, and hold out his hand. Jack shook hands, of course.

"Good-morning, Mr. Ogden," said the gentleman gravely, with almost a frown on his face, but very politely, and then he turned and walked out of the pew. Jack also bowed as he shook hands, and said, "Good-morning. Thank you, sir. I hope you enjoyed the sermon."

"General," said the gentleman in the pew behind them, "pretty good for raw material. Keep an eye on him."

"No, I won't," said the general. "I've spoiled four or five in that very way."

"Well, I believe you're right," said the judge, after a moment. "It's best for that kind of boy to fight his own battles. I had to."

"So did I," said the general, "and I was well pounded for a while."

Jack did not hear all of the conversation, but he had a clear idea that they were talking about him; and as he walked slowly out of the church, packed in among the crowd in the aisle, he had a very rosy face indeed.

Jack had in mind a thought that had often come to him

in the church at Crofield, near the end of the sermon :—he was conscious that it was dinner-time.

Of course he thought, with a little homesickness, of the home dinner-table.

"I wish I could sit right down with them," he thought, " and tell them what Sunday is in the city. Then my dinner wouldn't cost me a cent there, either. No matter, I'm here, and now I can begin to make more money right away. I have five dollars and fifty cents left anyway."

Then he thought of the bill of fare at the Hotel Dantzic, and many of the prices on it, and remembered Mr. Guilderaufenberg's instructions about going to some cheaper place for his meals.

"I didn't tell him that I had only nine dollars," he said to himself, "but I'll follow his advice. He's a traveler."

Jack had been too proud to explain how little money he had, but his German friend had really done well by him in making him take the little room at the top of the Hotel Dantzic. He had said to his wife :

"Dot poy! Vell, I see him again some day. He got a place to shleep, anyhow, vile he looks around und see de ceety. No oder poy I efer meets know at de same time so moch and so leetle."

With every step from the church door Jack felt hungrier, but he did not turn his steps toward the Hotel Dantzic. He walked on down to the lower part of the city, on the lookout for hotels and restaurants. It was not long before he came to a hotel, and then he passed another and another ; and he

passed a number of places where the signs told him of dinners to be had within, but all looked too fine.

"They're for rich people," he said, shaking his head, "like the people in that church. What stacks of money they must have? That organ maybe cost more than all the meeting-houses in Crofield!"

After going a little farther Jack exclaimed:

"I don't care! I've just got to eat!"

He was getting farther and farther from the Hotel Dantzic, and suddenly his eyes were caught by a very taking sign, at the top of some neat steps leading down into a basement:

"DINNER. ROAST BEEF. TWENTY-FIVE CENTS."

"That'll do." said Jack eagerly. "I can stand that. Roost beef alone is forty cents at the Dantzic."

Down he went and found himself in a wide comfortable room, containing two long dining tables, and a number of small oblong tables, and some round tables, all as neat as wax. It was a very pleasant place, and a great many other hungry people were there already.

Jack sat down at one of the small tables, and a waiter came to him at once.

"Dinner sir? Yessir. Roast beef, sir? Yessir. Vegetables? Potatoes? Lima-beans? Sweet corn?"

"Yes, please," said Jack. "Beef, potatoes, beans, and corn?" and the waiter was gone.

It seemed to be a long time before the beef and vegetables came, but they were not long in disappearing after they were on the table.

The waiter had other people to serve, but he was an attentive fellow.

"Pie sir?" he said, naming five kinds without a pause.

"Custard-pie," said Jack.

"Coffee, sir? Yessir," and he darted away again.

"This beats the Hotel Dantzic all to pieces," remarked Jack, as he went on with his pie and coffee; but the waiter was scribbling something upon a slip of paper, and when it was done he put it down by Jack's plate.

"Jingo!" said Jack in a horrified tone, a moment later. "What's this? 'Roast beef, 25; potatoes, 10; Lima-beans, 10; corn, 10; bread, 5; coffee, 10; pie, 10: $0.80.' Eighty cents! Jingo! How like smoke it does cost to live in New York! This can't be one of the cheap places Mr. Guilderaufenberg meant."

Jack felt much chagrined, but he finished his pie and coffee bravely. "It's a sell," he said, "—but then it *was* a good dinner!"

He went to the cashier with an effort to act as if it was an old story to him. He gave the cashier a dollar, received his change, and turned away, as the man behind the counter remarked to a friend at his elbow:

"I knew it. He had the cash. His face was all right."

"Clothes will fool anybody," said the other man.

Jack heard it, and he looked at the men sitting at the tables.

"They're all wearing Sunday clothes," he thought, "but

some are no better than mine. But there's a difference. I've noticed it all along."

So had others, for Jack had not seen one in that restaurant who had on at all such a suit of clothes as had been made for him by the Crofield tailor.

"Four dollars and seventy cents left," said Jack thoughtfully, as he went up into the street; and then he turned to go down-town without any reason for choosing that direction.

An hour later, Mr. Gilderaufenberg and his wife and their friends were standing near the front door of the Hotel Dantzic, talking with the proprietor. Around them lay their baggage, and in front of the door was a carriage. Evidently they were going away earlier than they had intended.

"Dot poy!" exclaimed the broad and bearded German. "He find us not here ven he come. You pe goot to dot poy, Mr. Keifelheimer."

"So!" said the hotel proprietor, and at once three other voices chimed in with good-bye messages to Jack Ogden. Mr. Keifelheimer responded:

"I see to him. He will come to Vashington to see you. So!"

Then they entered the carriage, and away they went.

After walking for a few blocks, Jack found that he did not know exactly where he was. But suddenly he exclaimed:

"Why, if there isn't City Hall Square! I've come all the way down Broadway."

He had stared at building after building for a time without thinking much about them, and then he had begun to read the signs.

"I'll come down this way again to-morrow," he said. It's good there are so many places to work in. I wish I knew exactly what I would like to do, and which of them it is best to go to. I know! I can do as I did in Crofield. I can try one for a while, and then, if I don't like it, I can try another. It is lucky that I know how to do 'most anything."

The confident smile had come back. He had entirely recovered from the shock of his eighty-cent expenditure. He had not met many people, all the way down, and the stores were shut; but for that very reason he had had more time to study the signs.

"Very nearly every kind of buisness is done on Broadway," he said, "except groceries and hardware,—but they sell more clothing than anything else. I'll look round everywhere before I settle down; but I must look out not to spend too much money till I begin to make some."

"It's not far now," he said, a little while after, "to the lower end of the city and to the Battery. I'll take a look at the Battery before I go back to the Hotel Dantzic."

Taller and more majestic grew the buildings as he went on, but he was not now so dazed and confused as he had been in the morning.

"Here is Trinity Church, again," he said. "I remember about that. And that's Wall Street. I'll see that as I come back; but now I'll go right along and see the Battery. Of

course there isn't any battery there, but Mr. Guilderaufenberg said that from it I could see the fort on Governor's Island."

Jack did not see much of the Battery, for he followed the left-hand sidewalk at the Bowling Green, where Broadway turns into Whitehall Street. He had so long been staring at great buildings whose very height made him dizzy, that he was glad to see beside them some which looked small and old.

"I'll find my way without asking," he remarked to himself. "I'm pretty near the end now. There are some gates, and one of them is open. I'll walk right in behind that carriage. That must be the gate to the Battery."

The place he was really looking for was at some distance to the right, and the carriage he was following so confidently, had a very different destination.

The wide gateway was guarded by watchful men, not to mention two policemen, and they would have caught and stopped any boy who had knowingly tried to do what Jack did so innocently. Their backs must have been turned, for the carriage passed in, and so did Jack, without any one's trying to stop him. He was as bold as a lion about it, because he did not know any better. A number of people were at the same time crowding through a narrower gateway at one side, and they may have distracted the attention of the gatemen.

"I'd just as lief go in at the wagon-gate," said Jack, and he did not notice that each one stopped and paid something

before going through. Jack went on behind the carriage. The carriage crossed what seemed to Jack a kind of bridge housed over. Nobody but a boy straight from Crofield could have gone so far as that without suspecting something; but the carriage stopped behind a line of other vehicles, and Jack walked unconcernedly past them.

"Jingo!" he suddenly exclaimed. "What's this? I do believe the end of this street is moving!"

He bounded forward, much startled by a thing so strange, and unaccountable, and in a moment more he was looking out upon a great expanse of water, dotted here and there with canal-boats, ships, and steamers.

"Mister," he asked excitedly of a little man leaning against a post, "what's this?"

"Have ye missed your way and got onto the wrong ferry-boat?" replied the little man gleefully. "I did it once myself. All right, my boy. You've got to go to Staten Island this time. Take it coolly."

"Ferry-boat?" said Jack. "Staten Island? I thought it was the end of the street, going into the Battery!"

"Oh, you're a greenhorn!" laughed the little man. "Well, it won't hurt ye; only there's no boat back from the island, on Sunday, till after supper. I'll tell ye all about it. Where'd you come from?"

"From Crofield," said Jack, "and I got here only this morning."

The little man eyed him half-suspiciously for a moment, and then led him to the rail of the boat.

"Look back there," he said. Yonder's the Battery. You ought to have kept on. It's too much for me how you ever got aboard of this 'ere boat without knowing it!" And he went on with a long string of explanations, of which Jack understood about half, with the help of what he recalled from his guide-book. All the while, however, they were having a sail across the beautiful bay, and little by little Jack made up his mind not to care.

"I've made a mistake and slipped right out of the city," he said to himself, "about as soon as I got in! But maybe I can slip back again this evening."

"About the greenest bumpkin I've seen for an age," thought the little man, as he stood and looked at Jack. "It'll take all sorts of blunders to teach him. He is younger than he looks, too. Anyway, this sail won't hurt him a bit."

That was precisely Jack's conclusion long before the swift voyage ended and he walked off the ferry-boat upon the solid ground of Staten Island.

CHAPTER XIV.

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES.

When Jack Ogden left the Staten Island ferry-boat, he felt somewhat as if he had made an unexpected voyage to China, and perhaps might never return to his own country. It was late in the afternoon, and he had been told by the little man that the ferry-boat would wait an hour and a half before the return voyage.

"I won't lose sight of her," said Jack, thoughtfully. "No running around for me this time!"

He did not move about at all. He sat upon an old box, in front of a closed grocery store, near the ferry-house, deciding to watch and wait until the boat started.

"Dullest time I ever had!" he thought; "and it will cost me six cents to get back. You have to pay something everywhere you go. I wish that boat was ready to go now."

It was not ready, and it seemed as if it never would be; meanwhile the Crofield boy sat there on the box and studied the ferry-boat business. He had learned something of it from his guide-book, but he understood it all before the gates opened.

He had not learned much concerning any part of Staten

Island, beyond what he already knew from the map; but shortly after he had paid his fare, he began to learn something about the bay and the lower end of New York.

"I'm glad to be on board again," he said, as he walked through the long cabin to the open deck forward. In a few minutes more he drew a long breath and exclaimed:

"She's starting! I know I'm on the right boat, too. But I'm hungry and I wish I had something to eat."

There was nothing to be had on board the boat, but, although hungry, Jack could see enough to keep him from thinking about it.

"It's all city; and all wharves and houses and steeples,—every way you look," he said. "I'm glad to have seen it from the outside, after all."

Jack stared, but did not say a word to anybody until the ferry-boat ran into its dock.

"If I only had a piece of pie and a cup of coffee!" Jack was thinking, as he walked along by the wharves, ashore. Then he caught sight of the smallest restaurant he had ever seen. It was a hand-cart with an awning over it, standing on a corner. A placard hanging from the awning read: "Clams, one cent apiece; coffee, five cents a cup."

"That's plain enough!" exclaimed Jack. "She can't put on a cent more for anything."

A stout, black-eyed woman stood behind a kind of table, at the end of the cart; and on the table there were bottles of vinegar and pepper-sauce, some crackers, and a big tin coffee-heater.

"Clams?" she repeated. "Half-dozen, on the shell? Coffee? All right."

"That's all I want, thank you," said Jack, and she at once filled a cup from the coffee-urn and began to open shellfish for him.

"These are the smallest clams I ever saw," thought Jack; "but they're good."

They seemed better and better as he went on eating; and the woman willingly supplied them. He drank his coffee and ate crackers freely, and he was just thinking that it was time for him to stop when the black-eyed woman remarked, with an air of pride,

"Nice and fresh, ain't they? You seem to like them,—thirteen's a dozen; seventeen cents."

"Have I swallowed a dozen already?" said Jack, looking at the pile of shells. "Yes, ma'am, they're tiptop!"

After paying for his supper, there were only some coppers left, besides four one-dollar bills, in his pocket-book.

"Which way's the Battery, ma'am?" Jack asked, as she began to open clams for another customer.

"Back there a way. Keep straight on till you see it," she answered; adding kindly, "It's like a little park; I didn't know you were from the country."

"Pretty good supper, after all," he said. "Cheap, too; but my money's leaking away! Well, it isn't dark yet. I must see all I can before I go to the hotel."

He followed the woman's directions, and he was glad he

Coffee and clams.

had done so. He had studied his guide-book faithfully as to all that end of New York, and in spite of his recent blunder did not now need to ask anybody which was the starting place of the elevated railways and which was Castle Garden, where the immigrants were landed. There were little groups of these foreigners scattered over the great open space before him.

"They've come from all over the world," he said, looking at group after group. "Some of those men will have a harder time than I have had trying to get started in New York."

It occurred to him, nevertheless, that he was a long way from Crofield, and that he was not yet at all at home in the city.

"I know some things that they don't know, anyway—if I *am* green!" he was thinking. "I'll cut across and take a nearer look at Castle Garden—"

"Stop there! Stop, you fellow in the light hat! Hold on!" Jack heard some one cry out, as he started to cross the turfed inclosures.

"What do you want of me?" Jack asked, as he turned around.

"Don't you see the sign there, 'Keep off the grass'? Look! You're on the grass now! Come off! Anyway, I'll fine you fifty cents!"

Jack looked as the man pointed, and saw a little board on a short post; and there was the sign, in plain letters; and here before him was a tall, thin, sharp-eyed, lantern-jawed

young man, looking him fiercely in the face and holding out his hand.

"Fifty cents! Quick, now,—or go with me to the police station."

Jack was a little bewildered for a moment. He felt like a cat in a very strange garret. His first thought of the police made him remember part of what Mr. Guilderaufenberg had told him about keeping away from them; but he remembered only the wrong part, and his hand went unwillingly into his pocket.

"Right off, now! No skulking!" exclaimed the sharp eyed man.

"I haven't fifty cents in change," said Jack, dolefully, taking a dollar bill from his pocket-book.

"Hand me that, then. I'll go and get it changed;" and the man reached out a claw-like hand and took the bill from Jack's fingers, without waiting for his consent. "I'll be right back. You stand right there where you are till I come—"

"Hold on!" shouted Jack. "I didn't say you could. Give me back that bill!"

"You wait. I'll bring your change as soon as I can get it," called the sharp-eyed man, as he darted away; but Jack's hesitation was over in about ten seconds.

"I'll follow him, anyhow!" he exclaimed; and he did so at a run.

"Halt!"—it was a man in a neat gray uniform and gilt buttons who spoke this time; and Jack halted just as the

fleeing man vanished into a crowd on one of the broad walks.

"He's got my dollar!"

"Tell me what it is, quick!" said the policeman, with a sudden expression of interest.

Jack almost spluttered as he related how the fellow had collected the fine; but the man in gray only shook his head.

"I thought I saw him putting up something," he said. "It's well he didn't get your pocket-book, too! He won't show himself here again to-night. He's safe by this time."

"Do you know him?" asked Jack, greatly excited; but more than a little in dread of the helmet-hat, buttons, and club.

"Know him? 'Jimmy the Sneak?' Of course I do. He's only about two weeks out of Sing Sing. It won't be long before he's back there again. When did you come to town? What's your name? Where'd you come from? Where are you staying? Do you know anybody in town?"

He had a pencil and a little blank-book, and he rapidly wrote out Jack's answers.

"You'll get your eyes open pretty fast, at this rate," he said. "That's all I want of you, now. If I lay a hand on Jimmy, I'll know where to find you. You'd better go home. If any other thief asks you for fifty cents, you call for the nearest policeman. That's what we're here for."

"A whole dollar gone, and nothing to show for it!" groaned Jack, as he walked away. "Only three dollars and a few cents left! I'll walk all the way up to the Hotel

Dantzic, instead of paying five cents for a car ride. I'll have to save money now."

He felt more kindly toward all the policemen he met, and he was glad there were so many of them.

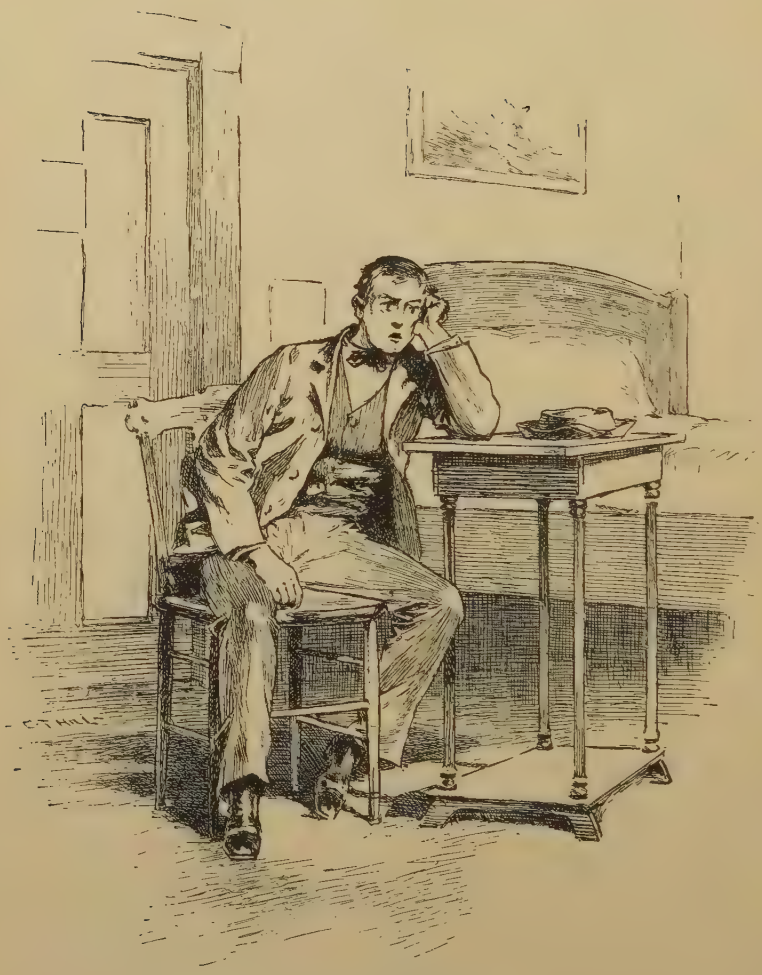
"The police at Central Park," he remarked to himself, "and that fellow at the Battery, were all in gray, and the street police wear blue; but they're a good-looking set of men. I hope they will nab Jimmy the Sneak and get back my dollar for me."

The farther he went, however, the clearer became his conviction that dollars paid to thieves seldom come back; and that an evening walk of more than three miles over the stone sidewalks of New York is a long stroll for a very tired and somewhat homesick country boy. He cared less and less, all the way, how strangely and how splendidly the gas-lights and the electric lights lit up the tall buildings.

"One light's white," he said, "and the other's yellowish, and that's about all there is of it. Well, I'm not quite so green, for I know more than I did this morning!"

It was late for him when he reached the hotel, but it seemed to be early enough for everybody else. Many people were coming and going, and among them all he did not see a face that he knew or cared for. The tired-out, homesick feeling grew upon him, and he walked very dolefully to the elevator. Up it went in a minute, and when he reached his room he threw his hat upon the table, and sat down to think over the long and eventful day.

"This is the toughest day's work I ever did! I'd like to



Jack is homesick.

see the folks in Crofield and tell 'em about it, though," he said.

He went to bed, intending to consider his plans for Monday, but he made one mistake. He happened to close his eyes.

The next thing he knew, there was a ray of warm sunshine striking his face from the open window, for he had slept soundly, and it was nearly seven o'clock on Monday morning.

Jack looked around his room, and then sprang out of bed.

"Hurrah for New York!" he said, cheerfully. "I know what to do now. I'm glad I'm here! I'll write a letter home, first thing, and then I'll pitch in and go to work!"

He felt better. All the hopes he had cherished so long began to stir within him. He brushed his clothes thoroughly, and put on his best necktie; and then he walked out of that room with hardly a doubt that all the business in the great city was ready and waiting for him to come and take part in it. He went down the elevator, after a glance at the stairway and a shake of his head.

"Stairs are too slow," he thought. "I'll try them some time when I am not so busy."

As he stepped out upon the lower floor he met Mr. Keifelheimer, the proprietor.

"You come in to preakfast mit me," he said. "I promise Mr. Guilderaufenberg and de ladies, too, I keep an eye on you. Some letters in de box for you. You get dem ven you come out. Come mit me."

Jack was very glad to hear of his friends, what had be-

come of them, and what they had said about him, and of course he was quite ready for breakfast. Mr. Keifelheimer talked, while they were eating, in the most friendly and protecting way. Jack felt that he could speak freely; and so he told the whole story of his adventures on Sunday,—Staten Island, Jimmy the Sneak, and all. Mr. Keifelheimer listened with deep interest, making appreciative remarks every now and then; but he seemed to be most deeply touched by the account of the eighty-cent dinner.

"Dot vas too much!" he said, at last. "It vas a schvindle! Dose Broadvay restaurants rob a man efery time. Now, I only charge you feefty-five cents for all dis beautiful breakfast; and you haf had de finest beefsteak and two cups of splendid coffee. So, you make money ven you eat mit me!"

Jack could but admit that the Hotel Dantzic price was lower than the other; but he paid it with an uneasy feeling that while he must have misunderstood Mr. Keifelheimer's invitation it was impossible to say so.

"Get dose letter," said the kindly and thoughtful proprietor. "Den you write in de office. It is better dan go avay up to your room."

Jack thanked him and went for his mail, full of wonder as to how any letters could have come to him.

"A whole handful!" he said, in yet greater wonder, when the clerk handed them out. "Who could have known I was here? Nine,—ten,—eleven,—twelve. A dozen!"

One after another Jack found the envelops full of nicely

printed cards and circulars, telling him how and where to find different kinds of goods.

"That makes eight," he said; "and every one a sell. But,—jingo!"

It was a blue envelope, and when he opened it his fingers came upon a dollar bill.

"Mr. Guilderaufenberg's a trump!" he exclaimed; and he added, gratefully, "I'd only about two dollars and a half left. He's only written three lines."

They were kindly words, however, ending with:

I have not tell the ladies; but you should be pay for the stateroom.

I hope you have a good time.

F. von Guilderaufenberg.

The next envelope was white and square; and when it came open Jack found another dollar bill.

"She's a real good woman!" he said, when he read his name and these words:

I say nothing to anybody; but you should have pay for your stateroom. You was so kind. In haste,

Gertrude von Guilderaufenberg.

"I'll go and see them some day," said Jack.

He had opened the eleventh envelope, which was square and pink, and out came another dollar bill. Jack read his own name again, followed by:

We go this minute. I have not told them. You should have pay for your stateroom. Thanks. You was so kind.

MARIE HILDEBRAND.

"Now, if she isn't one of the most thoughtful women in the world!" said Jack; "and what's this?"

Square, gray, with an ornamental seal, was the twelfth envelope, and out of it came a fourth dollar bill, and this note:

For the stateroom. I have told not the others. With thanks of DOLISKA POD——SKI.

It was a fine, small, pointed, and wandering handwriting, and Jack in vain strove to make out the letters in the middle of the Polish lady's name.

"I don't care!" he said. "She's kind, too. So are all the rest of them; and Mr. Guilderaufenberg's one of the best fellows I ever met. Now I 've got over six dollars, and I can make some more right away."

He pocketed his money, and felt more confident than ever; and he walked out of the Hotel Dantzic just as his father, at home in Crofield, was reading to Mrs. Ogden and Aunt Melinda and the children the letter he had written in Albany, on Saturday.

They all had their comments to make, but at the end of it the tall blacksmith said to his wife:

"There's one thing certain, Mary. I won't let go of any of that land till after they've run the railway through it."

"Land?" said Aunt Melinda. "Why, it's nothing but gravel. They can't do anything with it."

"It joins mine," said Mr. Ogden; and I own more than an acre behind the shop. We'll see whether the railroad will make any difference. Well, the boy's reached the city long before this!"

There was silence for a moment after that, and then Mr. Ogden went over to the shop. He was not very cheerful, for he began to feel that Jack was really gone from home.

In Mertonville, Mary Ogden was helping Mrs. Murdoch in her housework, and seemed to be disposed to look out of the window, rather than to talk.

"Now, Mary," said the editor's wife, "you needn't look so peaked, and feel so blue about the way you got along with that class of girls—"

"Girls?" said Mary. "Why, Mrs. Murdoch! Only half of them were younger than I; they said there would be only sixteen, and there were twenty-one. Some of the scholars were twice as old as I am, and one had gray hair and wore spectacles!"

"I don't care," said Mrs. Murdoch, "the Elder said you did well. Now, dear, dress yourself, and be ready for Mrs. Edwards; she's coming after you, and I hope you'll enjoy your visit. Come in and see me as often as you can and tell me the news."

Mary finished the dishes and went upstairs, saying, "And they want me to take that class again next Sunday!"

CHAPTER XV.

NO BOY WANTED.

After leaving the Hotel Dantzic, with his unexpected supply of money, Jack walked smilingly down toward the business part of the city. For a while he only studied signs and looked into great show-windows; and he became more and more confident as he thought how many different ways there were for a really smart boy to make a fortune in New York. He decided to try one way at just about nine o'clock.

"The city's a busy place!" thought Jack, as he walked along. "Some difference between the way they rush along on Monday and the way they loitered all day Sunday!"

He even walked faster because the stream of men carried him along. It made him think of the Cocahutchie.

"I'll try one of these big clothing places," he said, about nine o'clock. "I'll see what wages they're giving. I know something about tailoring."

He paused in front of a wide and showy-looking store on Broadway. He drew a long breath and went in. The moment he entered he was confronted by a very fat, smiling gentleman, who bowed and asked:

"What can we do for you, sir?"

"I'd like to know if you want a boy," said Jack, "and what wages you're giving. I know—"

"After a place? Oh, yes. That's the man you ought to see," said the jocose floor-walker, pointing to a spruce salesman behind a counter, and winking at him from behind Jack.

The business of the day had hardly begun, and the idle salesman saw the wink. Jack walked up to him and repeated his inquiry.

"Want a place, eh? Where are you from? Been long in the business?"

Jack told him about Crofield, and about the "merchant tailors" there, and gave a number of particulars before the very dignified and sober-faced salesman's love of fun was satisfied; and then the salesman said:

"I can't say. You'd better talk with that man yonder."

There was another wink, and Jack went to "that man," to answer another string of questions, some of which related to his family, and the Sunday-school he attended; and then he was sent on to another man, and another, and to as many more, until at last he heard a gruff voice behind him asking, "What does that fellow want? Send him to me!"

Jack turned toward the voice, and saw a glass "coop," as he called it, all glass panes up to above his head, excepting one wide, semicircular opening in the middle. The clerk to whom Jack was talking at that moment suddenly became very sober.

"Head of the house!" he exclaimed to himself.

"Whew! I didn't know he'd come." Then he said to Jack: "The head partner is at the cashier's desk. Speak to him."

Jack stepped forward, his cheeks burning with the sudden perception that he had been ridiculed. He saw a sharp-eyed lady counting money, just inside the little window, but she moved away, and Jack was confronted by a very stern, white-whiskered gentleman.

"What do you want?" the man asked.

"I'd like to know if you'll hire another boy, and what you're paying?" said Jack, bravely.

"No; I don't want any boy," replied the man in the coop, savagely. "You get right out."

"Tell you what you *do* want," said Jack, for his temper was rising fast, "you'd better get a politer set of clerks!"

"I will, if there is any more of this nonsense," said the head of the house, sharply. "Now, that's enough. No more impertinence."

Jack was all but choking with mortification, and he wheeled and marched out of the store.

"I wasn't afraid of him," he thought, "and I ought to have spoken to him first thing. I might have known better than to have asked those fellows. I sha'n't be green enough to do that again. I'll ask the head man next time."

That was what he tried to do in six clothing-stores, one after another; but in each case he made a failure. In two of them, they said the managing partner was out; and then, when he tried to find out whether they wanted a boy, the

man he asked became angry and showed him the door. In three more, he was at first treated politely, and then informed that they already had hundreds of applications. To enter the sixth store was an effort, but he went in.

"One of the firm? Yes, sir," said the floor-walker. "There he is."

Only a few feet from him stood a man so like the one whose face had glowered at him through that cashier's window in the first store that Jack hesitated a moment, but the clerk spoke out:

"Wishes to speak to you, Mr. Hubbard."

"This way, my boy. What is it?"

Jack was surprised by the full, mellow, benevolent voice that came from under the white moustaches.

"Do you want to hire a boy, sir?" he inquired.

"I do not, my son. Where are you from?" asked Mr. Hubbard, with a kindlier expression than before.

Jack told him, and answered two or three other questions.

"From up in the country, eh?" he said. "Have you money enough to get home again?"

"I could get home," stammered Jack, "but there isn't any chance for a boy up in Crofield."

"Ten chances there for every one there is in the city, my boy," said Mr. Hubbard. "One hundred boys here for every place that's vacant. You go home. Dig potatoes. Make hay. Drive cows. Feed pigs. Do *anything* honest, but get out of New York. It's one great pauper-house, now, with men and boys who can't find anything to do."

"Thank you, sir," said Jack, with a tightening around his heart. "But I'll find something. You see if I don't—"

"Take my advice, and go home!" replied Mr. Hubbard, kindly. "Good-morning."

"Good-morning," said Jack, and while going out of that store he had the vividest recollections of all the country around Crofield.

"I'll keep on trying, anyway," he said. "There's a place for me somewhere. I'll try some other trade. I'll do *anything*."

So he did, until one man said to him:

"Everybody is at luncheon just now. Begin again by and by; but I'm afraid you'll find there are no stores needing boys."

"I need some dinner myself," thought Jack. "I feel faint. Mister," he added aloud, "I must buy some luncheon, too. Where's a good place?"

He was directed to a restaurant, and he seated himself at a table and ordered roast beef in a sort of desperation.

"I don't care what it costs!" he said. "I've got some money yet."

Beef, potatoes, bread and butter, all of the best, came, and were eaten with excellent appetite.

Jack was half afraid of the consequences when the waiter put a bright red check down beside his plate.

"Thirty cents?" exclaimed he joyfully, picking it up. "Why, that's the cheapest dinner I've had in New York."

"All right, sir. Come again, sir," said the waiter, smiling; and then Jack sat still for a moment.

"Six dollars, and more too," he said to himself; and my room's paid for besides. I can go right on looking up a place, for days and days, if I'm careful about my money. I mustn't be discouraged.

He certainly felt more courageous, now that he had eaten dinner, and he at once resumed his hunt for a place; but there was very little left of his smile. He went into store after store with almost the same result in each, until one good-humored gentleman remarked to him:

"My boy, why don't you go to a Mercantile Agency?"

"What's that?" asked Jack, and the man explained what it was.

"I'll go to one right away," Jack said hopefully.

"That's the address of a safe place," said the gentleman writing a few words. "Look out for sharpers, though. Plenty of such people in that business. I wish you good luck."

Before long Jack Ogden stood before the desk of the "Mercantile Agency" to which he had been directed, answering questions and registering his name. He had paid a fee of one dollar, and had made the office-clerk laugh by his confidence.

"You seem to think you can take hold of nearly anything," he said. "Well, your chance is as good as anybody's. Some men prefer boys from the country, even if they can't give references."

"When do you think you can get me a place, asked Jack?"

"Can't tell. We've only between four hundred and five hundred on the books now; and sometimes we get two or three dozen fixed in a day."

"Five hundred!" exclaimed Jack, with a clouding face. "Why, it may be a month before my turn comes!"

"A month?" said the clerk. "Well, I hope not much longer, but it may be. I wouldn't like to promise you anything so soon as that."

Jack went out of that place with yet another idea concerning "business in the city," but he again began to make inquiries for himself. It was the weariest kind of work, and at last he was heartily sick of it.

"I've done enough for one day," he said to himself. "I've been into I don't know how many stores. I know more about it than I did this morning."

There was no doubt of that. Jack had been getting wiser all the while; and he did not even look so rural as when he set out. He was really beginning to get into city ways, and he was thinking hard and fast.

The first thing he did, after reaching the Hotel Dantzic, was to go up to his room. He felt as if he would like to talk with his sister Mary, and so he sat down and wrote her a long letter,

He told her about his trip, all through, and about his German friends, and his Sunday; but it was anything but easy to write about Monday's experiences. He did it after

a fashion, but he wrote much more cheerfully than he felt.

Then he went down to the supper-room for some tea. It seemed to him that he had ordered almost nothing, but it cost him twenty-five cents.

It would have done him good if he could have known how Mary's thoughts were at that same hour turning to him.

At home, Jack's father and Mr. Magruder were talking about Jack's land, arranging about the right of way and what it was worth, while he sat in his little room in the Hotel Dantzic, thinking over his long, weary day of snubs, blunders, insults and disappointments.

"Hunting for a place in the city is just the meanest kind of work," he said at last. "Well, I'll go to bed, and try it again to-morrow."

That was what he did; but Tuesday's work was "meaner" than Monday's. There did not seem to be even so much as a variation. It was all one dull, monotonous, miserable hunt for something he could not find. It was just so on Wednesday, and all the while, as he said, "Money will just melt away; and somehow you can't help it."

When he counted up, on Wednesday evening, however, he still had four dollars and one cent; and he had found a place where they sold bread and milk, or bread and coffee, for ten cents.

"I can get along on that," he said; "and it's only thirty-cents a day, if I eat three times. I wish I'd known about it

when I first came here. I'm learning something new all the time."

Thursday morning came, and with it a long, gossipy letter from Mary, and an envelope from Crofield, containing a letter from his mother and a message from his father written by her, saying how he had talked a little—only a little—with Mr. Magruder. There was a postscript from Aunt Melinda, and a seperate sheet written by his younger sisters, with scrawly postscripts from the little boys to tell Jack how the workmen had dug down and found the old church bell, and that there was a crack in it, and the clapper was broken off.

Jack felt queer over those letters.

"I won't answer them right away," he said. "Not till I get into some business. I'll go farther down town today, and try there."

At ten o'clock that morning, a solemn party of seven men met in the back room of the Mertonville Bank.

"Gentlemen of the Board of Trustees, please come to order. I suppose we all agree? We need a teacher of experience. The academy's not doing well. The lady principal can't do everything. She must have a good assistant."

"Who's your candidate, Squire Crowninshield?" asked Judge Edwards. "I'm trustee as Judge of the County Court. I've had thirty-one applications for my vote."

"I've had more than that," said the Squire good humor-

edly. "I won't name my choice till after the first ballot. I want to know who are the other candidates first."

"So do I," said Judge Edwards. "I wont name mine at once, either. Who is yours, Elder Holloway?"

"We'd better have a nominating ballot," remarked the Elder, handing a folded slip of paper to Mr. Murdoch, the editor of the *Eagle*. "Who is yours, Mr. Jeroliman?"

"I haven't any candidate," replied the bank-president, with a worried look. "I won't name any, but I'll put a bal lot in."

"Try that, then, said General Smith, who was standing instead of sitting down at the long table. "Just a suggestion."

Every trustee had something to say as to how he had been besieged by applicants, until the seventh, who remarked:

"I've just returned from Europe, gentlemen. I'll vote for the candidate having the most votes on this ballot. I don't care who wins."

"I agree to that," quickly responded General Smith, handing him a folded paper. "Put it in, Dr. Dillingham. It's better that none of us should do any log-rolling or try to influence others. I'll adopt your idea."

"I won't then," said Squire Crowninshield, pleasantly but very positively. "Murdoch what's the name of that young woman who edited the *Eagle* for a week?"

"Miss Mary Ogden," said the editor, with a slight smile.

"A clever girl," said the Squire, as he wrote on a paper, folded it, and threw it into a hat in the middle of the table. He had not heard Judge Edwards's whispered exclamation:

"That reminds me! I promised my wife that I'd mention Mary for the place; but then there wasn't the ghost of a chance!"

In went all the papers, and the hat was turned over.

"Now, gentlemen," said General Smith, "before the ballots are opened and counted, I wish to ask: Is this vote to be considered regular and formal? Shall we stand by the result?"

"Certainly, certainly," said the trustees in chorus.

"Count the ballots!" said the Elder.

The hat was lifted and the count began.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven—for Mary Ogden," said Elder Holloway calmly.

"I declare!" said General Smith. "Unanimous? Why, gentlemen, we were agreed! There really was no difference of opinion whatever."

"I'm glad she is such a favorite," said Judge Edwards; "but we cant raise the salary on that account. It'll have to remain at forty dollars a month."

"I'm glad she's got it!" said Mr. Murdoch. "And a unanimous vote is a high testimonial!"

And so Mary was elected.

Each of them had other business to attend to, and it was not until Judge Edwards went home, at noon, that the news was known to Mary, for the Judge carried the pleasant tidings to Mary Ogden at the dinner-table.

"Oh, Judge Edwards!" exclaimed Mary, turning pale. "I? At my age—to be assistant principal of the academy?"

"There's only the Primary Department to teach," said the Judge encouragingly. "Not half so hard as that big, overgrown Sunday-school class. Only it never had a good teacher yet, and you'll have hard work to get it into order."

"What will they say in Crofield!" said Mary uneasily. "They'll say I'm not fit for it."

"I'm sure Miss Glidden will not," said Mrs. Edwards, proudly. "I'm glad it was unanimous. It shows what they all thought of you."

Perhaps it did; but perhaps it was as well for Mary Ogden's temper that she could not hear all that was said when the other trustees went home to announce their action.

It was a great hour for Mary, but her brother Jack was at that same time beginning to think that New York City was united against him,—a million and a half to one.

He had been fairly turned out of the last store he had entered.

CHAPTER XVI.

JACK'S FAMINE.

At Crofield, the morning mail brought a letter from Mary, telling of her election.

There was not so very much comment, but Mrs. Ogden cried a little, and said:

"I feel as if we were beginning to lose the children."

"I must go to work," said the tall blacksmith after a time; "but I don't feel like it. So Mary's to teach, is she? She seems very young. I wish I knew about Jack."

Meanwhile, poor Jack was half hopelessly inquiring, of man after man, whether or not another boy was wanted in his store. It was only one long, flat, monotony of "No, sir," and at last he once more turned his weary footsteps up-town, and hardly had he done so before he waked up a little and stood still, and looked around him.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, "I never was here before. This must be Chatham Square and the Bowery. I've read about them in the guide-book. I can go home this way. It's not much like Broadway."

So he thought, as he went along. And it did not at all resemble Broadway. It seemed to swarm with people; they

appeared to be attending to their own business, and they were all behaving very well, so far as Jack could see.

"Never saw such a jam," said Jack, as he pushed into a small throng on a street corner, trying to get through; but at the word "jam" something came down upon the top of his hat and forced it forward over his eyes.

Up went both of his hands, instinctively, and at that moment each arm was at once caught and held up for a second or two. It was all done in a flash. Jack knew that some boisterous fellow had jammed his hat over his eyes, and that others had hustled him a little; but he had not been hurt, and he did not feel like quarreling, just then. He pushed along through the throng, and was getting out to where the crowd was thinner, when he suddenly felt a chill and a weak feeling at his heart. He had thrust his hand into his pocket.

"My pocket-book!" he said, faintly. "It's gone! Where could I have lost it? I haven't taken it out anywhere. And there was more than three dollars in it I'd saved to pay for my room!"

He leaned heavily against a lamp-post for a moment, and all the bright ideas he had ever had about the city became very dim and far away. He put up one hand before his eyes, and at that moment his arm was firmly grasped.

"Here, boy! What's the matter?"

He looked up, and saw a blue uniform and a hand with a club in it, but he could not say a word in reply.

"You seem all right. Are you sick?"

"I've lost my pocket-book."

"I've lost my pocket-book," said Jack. "Every cent I had except some change."

"That's bad," and the keen-eyed officer understood the matter at a glance, for he added:

"You were caught in a crowd, and had your pocket picked? I can't do anything for you, my boy. It's gone, and that's all there is of it. Never push into crowds if you've any money about you. You'd better go home now."

"Only sixty-five cents left," Jack said, as he walked away, "for this evening, and Saturday, and Sunday, and for all next week, till I get something to do and am paid for doing it!"

He had eaten ten cents' worth of bread and milk at noon; but he was a strong and healthy boy and he was again hungry. Counting his change made him hungrier, and he thought longingly of the brilliant supper-room at the Hotel Dantzic.

"That won't do," he thought. "I must keep away from Keifelheimer and his restaurant. There, now, that's something like."

It was a small stand, close by a dark-looking cellar way. Half was covered with apples, candy, peanuts, bananas, oranges, and cocoa-nuts. The other half was a pay-counter, a newspaper stand, and an eating-house. Jack's interest centered on a basket, marked, "Ham Sanwiges Five Cents."

"I can afford a sandwich," he said, "and I've got to eat something!"

At the moment when he leaned over and picked up a

sandwich, a small old woman, behind the counter, reached out her hand toward him; and another small old woman stretched her hand out to a boy who was testing the oranges; and a third small old woman sang out very shrilly:

"Here's your sanwiges! Ham sanwiges! Only five cents! Benannies! Oranges! Sanwiges!"

Jack put five cents into the woman's hand, and he was surprised to find how much good bread and boiled ham he had bought.

"It's all the supper I'll have," he said, as he walked away. "I could eat a loaf of bread and a whole ham, it seems to me!"

All the way to the Hotel Dantzic he studied over the loss of his pocket-book.

"The policeman was right," he said to himself, at last. "I didn't know when they took it, but it must have been when my hat was jammed down."

When Jack met Mr. Keifelheimer in the hotel office, he asked him what he thought about it. An expression of strong indignation, if not of horror, crossed the face of the hotel proprietor.

"Dey get you pocket-book?" he exclaimed. "You vas rob choost de same vay I vas; but mine vas a votch und shain. It vas two year ago, und I nefer get him back. Your friend, Mr. Guilderaufenberg, he vas rob dot vay, vonce, but den he vas ashleep in a railvay car und not know ven it vas done!"

Jack was glad of so much sympathy, but just then business called Mr. Keifelheimer away.

"I won't go upstairs," thought Jack. "I'll sit in the reading-room."

No letters were awaiting him, but there were plenty of newspapers, and nearly a score of men were reading or talking. Jack did not really care to read, nor to talk, nor even to listen; but two gentlemen near him were discussing a subject that reminded him of the farms around Crofield.

"Yes," he heard one of them say, "we must buy every potato we can secure. At the rate they're spoiling now, the price will be doubled before December."

"Curious, how little the market knows about it yet," said the other, and they continued discussing letters and reports about potatoes, from place after place, and State after State, and all the while Jack listened, glad to be reminded of Crofield.

"It was just so with our potatoes at home," he said to himself. "Some farmers didn't get back what they planted."

This talk helped him to forget his pocket-book for a while; then, after trying to read the newspapers, he went to bed.

A very tired boy can always sleep. Jack Ogden awoke, on Saturday morning, with a clear idea that sleep was all he had had for supper,—excepting one ham sandwich.

"It's not enough," he said, as he dressed himself. "I must make some money. Oh, my pocket-book! And I shall have to pay for my room, Monday."

He slipped out of the Hotel Dantzic very quietly, and he had a fine sunshiny walk of two and a half miles to the

down-town restaurant where he ate his ten cents' worth of bread and milk.

"It's enough for a while," he said, "but it doesn't last. If I was at home, now, I'd have more bread and another bowl of milk. I'll come here again, at noon, if I don't find a place somewhere."

Blue, blue, blue, was that Saturday for poor Jack Ogden! All the forenoon he stood up manfully to hear the "No, we don't want a boy," and he met that same answer, expressed in almost identical words, everywhere.

When he came out from his luncheon of bread and milk, he began to find that many places closed at twelve or one o'clock; that even more were to close at three, and that on Saturday all men were either tired and cross or in a hurry. Jack's courage failed him until he could hardly look a man in the face and ask him a question. One whole week had gone since Jack reached the city, and it seemed about a year. Here he was, without any way of making money, and almost without a hope of finding any way.

"I'll go to the hotel," he said, at about four o'clock. "I'll go up the Bowery way. It won't pay anybody to pick my pocket this time!"

He had a reason for going up the Bowery. It was no shorter than the other way. The real explanation was in his pocket.

"Forty cents left!" he said. "I'll eat one sandwich for supper, and I'll buy three more to eat in my room to-morrow."

He reached the stand kept by the three small old women, and found each in turn calling out, "Here you are! Sanwiges!—" and all the rest of their list of commodities.

"Four," said Jack. "Put up three of 'em in a paper, please. I'll eat one."

It was good. In fact, it was too good, and Jack wished it was ten times as large; but the last morsel of it vanished speedily and after looking with longing eyes at the others, he shut his teeth firmly.

"I won't eat another!" he said to himself. "I'll starve it out till Monday, anyway!"

It took all the courage Jack had to carry those three sandwiches to the Hotel Dantzic and to put them away, untouched, in his traveling-bag. After a while he went down to the reading-room and read; but he went to bed thinking of the excellent meals he had eaten at the Albany hotel on his way to New York.

Mary Ogden's second Sunday in Mertonville was a peculiar trial to her, for several young ladies who expected to be in the Academy next term, came and added themselves to that remarkable Sunday-school class. So did some friends of the younger Academy girls; and the class had to be divided, to the disappointment of those excluded.

"Mary Ogden didn't need to improve," said Elder Holloway to the Superintendent, "but she is doing better than ever!"

How Jack did long to see Mary, or some of the family in

Crofield, and Crofield itself! As soon as he was dressed he opened the bag and took out one of his sandwiches and looked at it.

"Why, they're smaller than I thought they were!" he said ruefully; "but I can't expect too much for five cents! I've just twenty cents left. That sandwich tastes good if it *is* small!"

So soon was it all gone that Jack found his breakfast very unsatisfactory.

"I don't feel like going to church," he said, "but I might as well. I can't sit cooped up here all day. I'll go into the first church I come to, as soon as it's time."

He did not care where he went when he left the hotel, and perhaps it did not really make much difference, considering how he felt; but he found a church and went in. A young man showed him to a seat under the gallery. Not until the minister in the pulpit came forward to give out a hymn, did Jack notice anything peculiar, but the first sonorous, rolling cadences of that hymn startled the boy from Crofield.

"Whew!" he said to himself. "It's Dutch or something. I can't understand a word of it! I'll stay, though, now I'm here."

German hymns, and German prayers, and a tolerably long sermon in German, left Jack Ogden free to think of all sorts of things, and his spirits went down, down, down, as he recalled all the famines of which he had heard or read and all the delicacies invented to tempt the appetite. He sat very still, however, until the last hymn was sung, and then he walked slowly back to the Hotel Dantzic.

"I don't care to see Mr. Keifelheimer," he thought. "He'll ask me to come and eat at a big Sunday dinner,—and to pay for it. I'll dodge him."

He watched at the front door of the hotel for fully three minutes, until he was sure that the hall was empty. Then he slipped into the reading-room and through that into the rear passageway leading to the elevator; but he did not feel safe until on his way to his room.

"One sandwich for dinner," he groaned, as he opened his bag. "I never knew what real hunger was till I came to the city! Maybe it won't last long, though. I'm not the first fellow who's had a hard time before he made a start."

Jack thought that both the bread and the ham were cut too thin, and that the sandwich did not last long enough.

"I'll keep my last twenty cents, though," thought Jack, and he tried to be satisfied.

Before that afternoon was over, the guide-book had been again read through, and a long home letter was written.

"I'll mail it," he said, "as soon as I get some money for stamps. I haven't said a word to them about famine. It must be time to eat that third sandwich; and then I'll go out and take a walk."

The sandwich was somewhat dry, but every crumb of it seemed to be valuable. After eating it, Jack once more walked over and looked at the fine houses on Fifth Avenue; but now it seemed to the hungry lad an utter absurdity to think of ever owning one of them. He stared and

wondered and walked, however, and returned to the hotel tired out.

On Monday morning, the Ogden family were at breakfast, when a neat looking farm-wagon stopped before the door. The driver sprang to the ground, carefully helped out a young woman, and then lifted down a trunk. Just as the trunk came down upon the ground there was a loud cry in the open doorway.

"Mother! Molly's come home!" and out sprang little Bob.

"Mercy on us!" Mrs. Ogden exclaimed, and the whole family were on their feet.

Mary met her father as she was coming in. Then, picking up little Sally and kissing her, she said:

"There was a way for me to come over, this morning. I've brought my books home, to study till term begins. Oh, mother, I'm so glad to get back!"

The blacksmith went out to thank the farmer who had brought her; but the rest went into the house to get Mary some breakfast and to look at her and to hear her story.

Mrs. Ogden said several times:

"I do wish Jack was here, too!"

That very moment her son was leaving the Hotel Dantzic behind him, with two and a half miles to walk before getting his breakfast—a bowl of bread and milk.

CHAPTER XVII.

JACK-AT-ALL-TRADES.

Jack Ogden, that Monday morning, had an idea that New York was a very long city.

He had eaten nothing since Saturday noon, excepting the sandwiches, and he felt that he should not be good for much until after he had had breakfast. His mind was full of unpleasant memories of the stores and offices he had entered during his last week's hunt, and he did not relish renewing it.

"I must go ahead though," he thought. "Something must be done, or I'll starve."

Every moment Jack felt better, and he arose from the table a little more like himself.

"Ten cents left," he said, as he went out into the street. "That'll buy me one more bowl of bread and milk. What shall I do then?"

It was a serious question, and demanded attention. It was still very early for the city, but stores were beginning to open, and groups of men were hurrying along the sidewalks on their way to business. Jack went on, thinking and thinking, and a fit of depression was upon him when he

entered a street turning out from Broadway. He had not tried this street before. It was not wide, and it was beginning to look busy. At the end of two blocks, Jack uttered an exclamation:

"Ten cents left."

"That's queer!" he said. "They all sell coffee, tea, groceries, and that sort of thing. Big stores, too. I'll try here."

His heart sank a little, as he paused in front of a very bustling establishment, bearing every appearance of prosper-

ity. Some men were bringing out tea-chests and bags of coffee to pile around the doorway, as if to ask passers-by to walk in and buy some. The show-windows were already filled with samples of sugar, coffee, and a dozen other kinds of goods. Just beyond one window Jack could see the first of a row of three huge coffee-grinders painted red, and back of the other window was more machinery.

"I'll go in, anyway," he said, setting his teeth. "Only ten cents left!"

That small coin, because it was all alone in his pocket, drove him into the door. Two thirds down the broad store there stood a black-eyed, wiry, busy-looking man, giving various directions to the clerks and other men. Jack thought, "He's the 'boss.' He looks as if he'd say no, right away."

Although Jack's heart was beating fast, he walked boldly up to this man:

"Mister," he said, "do you want to hire another boy?"

"You are the hundred and eleventh boy who has asked that same question within a week. No," responded the black-eyed man, sharply but good naturedly.

"Gifford," came at that moment from a very cheerful voice over Jack's left shoulder, "I've cleaned out that lot of potatoes. Sold two thousand barrels on my way down, at a dollar and a half a barrel."

Jack remembered that some uncommonly heavy footsteps had followed him when he came in, and found that he had to look upward to see the face of the speaker, who was

unusually tall. The man leaned forward, too, so that Jack's face was almost under his.

Mr. Gifford's answer had disappointed Jack and irritated him.

"You did well!" said Mr. Gifford.

Before he had time to think Jack said:

"A dollar and a half? Well, if you knew anything about potatoes, you wouldn't have let them go for a dollar and a half a barrel!"

"What do you know about potatoes?" growled the tall man, leaning an inch lower, and frowning at Jack's interruption.

"More than you or Mr. Gifford seems to," said Jack desperately. "The crop's going to be short. I know how it is up *our* way."

"Tell us what you know!" said the tall man sharply; and Mr. Gifford drew nearer with an expression of keen interest upon his face.

"They're all poor," said Jack, and then he remembered and repeated, better than he could have done if he had made ready beforehand, all he had heard the two men say in the Hotel Dantzic reading-room, and all he had heard in Crofield and Mertonville. He had heard the two men call each other by name, and he ended with:

"Didn't you sell your lot to Murphy & Scales? They're buying everywhere."

"That's just what I did," said the tall man. "I wish I hadn't; I'll go right out and buy!" and away he went.

"Buy some on my account," said Mr. Gifford, as the other man left the store. "See here, my boy, I don't want to hire anybody. But you seem to know about potatoes. Probably you're just from a farm. What else do you know? What can you do?"

"A good many things," said Jack, and to his own astonishment he spoke out clearly and confidently.

"Oh, you can?" laughed Mr. Gifford. "Well, I don't need you, but I need an engineer. I wish you knew enough to run a small steam-engine."

"Why, I can run a steam-engine," said Jack. "That's nothing. May I see it?"

Mr. Gifford pointed at some machinery behind the counter, near where he stood, and at the apparatus in the show-window.

"It's a little one that runs the coffee-mills and the printing-press," he said. "You can't do anything with it until a machinist mends it—it's all out of order, I'm told."

"Perhaps I can," said Jack. "A boy who's learned the blacksmith's trade ought to be able to put it to rights."

Without another word, Jack went to work.

"Nothing wrong here, Mr. Gifford," he said in a minute. "Where are the screw-driver, and the monkey-wrench, and an oil-can?"

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Gifford, as he sent a man for the tools. "Do you think you can do it?"

Jack said nothing aloud, but he told himself:

"Why, it's a smaller size but like the one in the *Eagle*

office. They get out of order easily, but then it's easy to regulate them."

"You *do* know something," said Mr. Gifford, laughing, a few minutes later, when Jack said to him:

"She'll do now."

"She won't do very well," added Mr. Gifford, shaking his head. "That engine never was exactly the thing. It lacks power."

"It may be the pulley-belt's too loose," said Jack, after studying the mechanism for a moment.

"I'll send for a man to fix it, then."

"No, you needn't," said Jack. "I can tighten it so she'll run all the machinery you have. May I have an awl?"

"Of course," said Mr. Gifford. "Put it to rights. There's plenty of coffee waiting to be ground."

Jack went to work at the loose belt.

"He's a bright fellow," said Mr. Gifford to his head-clerk. "If we wanted another boy—but we don't."

"Too many now," was the short, decisive reply.

It was not long before the machinery began to move.

"Good!" said Mr. Gifford. "I almost wish I had something more for you to do, but I really haven't. If you could run that good-for-nothing old printing-press—"

"Printing-press?" exclaimed Jack.

"Over in the other window," said Mr. Gifford. "We thought of printing all our own circulars, cards, and paper bags. But it's a failure, unless we should hire a regular

printer. We shall have to, I suppose. If you were a printer, now."

"I've worked at a press," said Jack. "I'm something of a printer. I'm sure I can do that work. It's like a press I used to run when I worked in that business."

Jack at once went to the show-window.

"An 'Alligator' press," he said, "like the one in the *Standard* office. It ought to be oiled, though. It needs adjusting, too. No wonder it would not work. I can make it go."

The business of the store was beginning. Steam was up in the engine, and the coffee-mills were grinding merrily. Mr. Gifford and all his clerks were busied with other matters, and Jack was left to tinker away at the Alligator press. "She's ready to run. I'll start her," he said at last.

He took an impression of the form of type that was in the press and read it.

"I see," he said. "They print that on their paper bags for an advertisement. I'll show it to Mr. Gifford. There are plenty of blank ones lying around here, all ready to print."

He walked up to the desk and handed in the proof, asking:

"Is that all right?"

"No," said Mr. Gifford. "We let our stock of bags run down because the name of the firm was changed. I want to add several things. I'll send for somebody to have the proof corrections made."

"You needn't," said Jack. "Tell me what you want. Any boy who's ever worked in a newspaper office can do a little thing like that."

"How do you come to know so much about machinery?" asked Mr. Gifford, trying not to laugh.

"Oh," said Jack, "I was brought up a blacksmith, but I've worked at other trades, and it was easy enough to adjust those things."

"That's what you've been up to is it?" said Mr. Gifford. "I saw you hammering and filing, and I wondered what you'd accomplished. I want the new paper bags to be,"—and he told Jack what changes were required, and added: "Then, of course, I shall need some circulars—three kinds—and some cards."

"That press will run over a thousand an hour when it's geared right. You'll see," said Jack, positively.

"Well, here's a true Jack-at-all-trades!" exclaimed Mr. Gifford, opening his eyes. "I begin to wish we had a place for you!"

It was nearly noon before Jack had another sample of printing ready to show. There was a good supply of type, to be sure, but he was not much of a printer, and type-setting did not come easily to him. He worked almost desperately, however, and meanwhile his brains were as busy as the coffee-mills. He succeeded finally, and it was time, for a salesman was just reporting:

"Mr. Gifford, we're out of paper bags."

"We must have some right away," said Mr. Gifford. "I

wish that youngster really knew how to print them. He's tinkering at it over there."

"Is that right?" asked Jack only a second later, holding out a printed bag.

"Why, yes, that's the thing. Go ahead," said the surprised coffee-dealer. "I thought you'd failed this time."

"I'll run off a lot," said Jack, "and then I'll go out and get something to eat."

"No, you won't," said Mr. Gifford promptly. "No going out, during business hours, in *this* house. I'll have a luncheon brought to you. I'll try you to-day, anyhow."

Back went Jack without another word, but he thought silently, "That saves me ten cents."

The Alligator press was started, and Jack fed it with the blank paper bags the salesmen needed, and he began to feel happy. He was even happier when his luncheon was brought; for the firm of Gifford & Company saw that their employees fared well.

"I declare!" said Jack to himself, "it's the first full meal I've had since last week Wednesday! I was starved."

On went the press, and the young pressman sat doggedly at his task; but he was all the while watching things in the store and hearing whatever there was to hear.

"I know their prices pretty well," he thought. "Most of the things are marked—ever so much lower than Crofield prices, too."

He had piles of printed bags of different sizes ready for use, now lying around him.

"Time to get at some of those circulars," he was saying, as he arose from his seat at the press and stepped out behind the counter.

"Five pounds of coffee," said a lady, before the counter, in a tone of vexation. "I've waited long enough. Mocha and Java, mixed."

"Thirty-five cents," said Jack.

"Quick, then," said she, and he darted away to fill her order.

"Three and a half pounds of powdered sugar," said another lady, as he passed her.

"Yes, ma'am," said Jack.

"How much is this soap?" asked a stout old woman, and Jack remembered that price too.

He was not at all aware that anybody was watching him; but he was just telling another customer about tea and baking-soda when he felt a hand upon his shoulder.

"See here," demanded Mr. Gifford, "what are you doing behind the counter?"

"I was afraid they'd get tired of waiting and go somewhere else," said Jack. "I know something about waiting on customers. Yes, ma'am, that's a fine tea. Forty-eight cents. Half pound? Yes ma'am. In a jiffy, Mr Gifford;—there are bags enough for to-day."

"I think you may stay," said the head of the house. "I didn't need another boy; but I begin to think I do need a blacksmith, a carpenter, a printer, and a good sharp salesman." As he was turning away he added, "It's surprising how quickly he has picked up our prices."

Jack's fingers were trembling nervously, but his face brightened as he did up that package.

Mr. Gifford waited while the Crofield boy answered yet another customer and sold some coffee, and told Jack to go right on.

"Come to the desk," he then said. "I don't even know your name. Come."

Very hot and yet a little shaky was Jack as he followed; but Mr. Gifford was not a verbose man.

"Mr. Jones," he said to the head clerk, "please take down his name;—what is it?"

"John Ogden, sir," and after other questions and answers, Mr. Gifford said:

"Find a cheaper boarding-place. You can get good board for five dollars a week. Your pay is only ten dollars a week to begin, and you must live on that. We'll see that you earn it, too. You can begin printing circulars and cards."

Jack went, and Mr. Gifford added:

"Why, Mr. Jones, he's saved sending for three different workmen since he came in. He'll make a good salesman, too. He's a boy—but he isn't only a boy. I'll keep him."

Jack went to the press as if in a dream.

"A place!" he said to himself. "Well, yes. I've got a place. Good wages, too; but I suppose they won't pay until Saturday night. How am I to keep going until then? I have to pay my bill at the Hotel Dantzic, too—now I've begun on a new week. I'll go without my supper, and buy a sandwich in the morning, and then—I'll get along somehow."

He worked all that afternoon with an uneasy feeling that he was being watched. The paper bags were finished, a fair supply of them; and then the type for the circular needed only a few changes, and he began on that. Each new job made him remember things he had learned in the *Standard* office, or had gathered from Mr. Black, the wooden foreman of the *Eagle*. It was just as well, however, that things needed only fixing up and not setting anew, for that might have been a little beyond him. As it was, he overcame all difficulties, besides leaving the press three times to act as salesman.

Gifford & Co. kept open to accommodate customers who purchased goods on their way home; and it was after nearly all other business houses, excepting such as theirs, were closed, that the very tall man leaned in at the door and then came striding down the store to the desk.

"Gifford," he said, "that clerk of yours was right. There's almost a panic in potatoes. I've got five thousand barrels for you, and five thousand for myself, at a dollar and sixty, and the price just jumped. They will bring two dollars. If they do, we'll make two thousand apiece."

"I'm glad you did so well," said Mr. Gifford dryly, "but don't say much to him about it. Let him alone—"

"Well, yes;—but I want to do something for him. Give him this ten dollar bill from me."

"Very well," said Mr. Gifford, "you owe the profit to him. I'll take care of my side of the matter. Ogden, come here a moment!"

Jack stopped the press and came to the desk. The money was handed to him.

"It's just a bit of luck," said the tall man; "but your information was valuable to me."

"Thank you," said Jack, after he had in vain refused the money.

"You've done enough," said Mr. Gifford; "this will do for your first day. Eight o'clock in the morning, remember. Good-night!"

"I'm glad I belong here," Jack said to himself. "If I'd had my pick of the city I would have chosen this very store. Ten dollars! I can pay Mr. Keifelheimer now, and I sha'n't have to starve to death."

Jack felt so prosperous that he walked only to the nearest station of the elevated railway, and cheerfully paid five cents for a ride up-town.

When the Hotel Dantzic was reached, it seemed a much more cheerful and home-like building than it had appeared when he left it in the morning; and Jack had now no notion of dodging Mr. Keifelheimer. There he stood on the doorstep, looking stern and dignified. He was almost too polite when Jack said:

"Good-evening, Mr. Keifelheimer."

"Goot-efening," he replied, with a bow. "I hope you gets along vell mit your beezness?"

"Pretty well," said Jack cheerfully.

"Vere vas you feexed?" asked Mr. Keifelheimer, doubtfully.

Jack dines with Mr. Keifelheimer.

Jack held out one of the business cards of Gifford & Company, and replied:

"That's where I am. I guess I'll pay for my room here till the end of this week, and then I'll find a place farther down town."

"I vas so sorry dey peek your pocket," said Mr. Keifelheimer, looking at the card. "Tell you vat, Mr. Ogden, you take supper mit me. It cost you not'ing. I haf to talk some mit you."

"All right," said Jack. "I'll pay up at the desk, and then I'll get ready for dinner."

When he came down Mr. Keifelheimer was waiting for him, very smiling, but not nearly so polite and dignified. Hardly were they seated at the supper-table, before the proprietor coughed twice affectedly, and then remarked:

"You not leaf de Hotel Dantzic, Mr. Ogden. I use up pounds and boxes of tea und sugar und coffee, und all dose sometings dey sell at Gufford und Gompany's. You get me de best prices mit dem, und you safe me a great heap of money. I get schwindled, schwindled, all de times! You vas keep your room, und you pays for vat you eats. De room is a goot room, but it shall cost you not vun cent. So? If I find you safe me money, I go on mit you."

"I'll do my best," said Jack. "Let me know what you're paying now."

"Ve go all ofer de leest after ve eat someting," said Mr. Keifelheimer. "Mr. Guilderaufenberg say goot deal about you. So did de ladies. I vas sorry dot dey peek your pocket."

Probably he had now forgotten just what he had thought of saying to Jack in case the boy had not been able to pay for his room, and had been out of employment; but Jack was enjoying a fine illustration of that wise proverb which says: "Nothing succeeds like success."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DRUMMER BOY.

The Ogden family had said very little, outside of their own house, about the news of Mary's success in Mertonville, but on that Monday morning Miss Glidden received no less than four letters, and each of them congratulated her over the election of her dear young friend, and commented on how glad she must be. "Well," she said to herself, "of course I'm glad. And I did all I could for her. She owes it all to me. I'll go and see her."

Mary Ogden had so much talking to do and so many questions to answer, at the breakfast table, that her cup of coffee was cold before she could drink it, and then she and her mother and her aunt went into the parlor to continue their talk.

John Ogden himself waited there a long time before going over to the shop. His helper had the forge ready, and the tall blacksmith at once put a rod of iron into the fire and began to blow the bellows. The rod was at white heat and was out on the anvil in no time, and the hammer began to ring upon it to flatten it out when John heard somebody speak to him:

"Mr. Ogden, what are you making? I've been watching you—and I can't imagine!"

"Well, Deacon Hawkins," said the blacksmith, "you'll have to tell. The fact is I was thinking—well—my daughter has just come home."

"I'm glad to hear it and to hear of her success," answered the Deacon. "Miss Glidden told us. If you're not busy, I wish you'd put a shoe on my mare's off hind foot."

The blacksmith then went to work in earnest; and meanwhile Mary, at the house, was receiving the congratulations of her friends. "Why, Mary Ogden, my dear! Are you here?" exclaimed Miss Glidden. "I'm so glad! I'm sure I did all I could for you." "My dear Mary!" exclaimed another. And Mary shook hands heartily with both her callers, and expressed her gratitude to Miss Glidden.

It was a day of triumph for Mary, and it must have been for Miss Glidden, for she seemed to be continually persuading herself that much of the credit of Mary's advancement was hers. The neighbors came and went, and more than one of Mary's old school-fellows said to her: "I'm glad you are so fortunate. I wish *I* could find something to do." When the visitors were gone and Mary tried to help with the housework, her mother said positively, "Now, Molly, don't touch a thing; you go upstairs to your books, and don't think of anything else; I'm afraid you won't have half time enough, even then."

Her aunt gave the same advice, and Mary was grateful,

being unusually eager to begin her studies; and even little Sally was compelled to keep out of Mary's room.

During the latter part of that Monday afternoon John Ogden had an important conference with Mr. Magruder, the railway director; and the blacksmith came home, at night, in a thoughtful state of mind.

His son Jack, at about the same time sat in his room, at the Hotel Dantzic, in the far-away city he had struggled so hard to reach; and he, too, was in a thoughtful mood.

"I'll write and tell the family at home, and Mary," he said after a while. "I wonder whether every fellow who makes a start in New York has to almost starve at the beginning!"

He was tired enough to sleep well when bed-time came; but, nevertheless, he was downstairs Tuesday morning long before Mr. Keifelheimer's hour for appearing. Hotel-men who have to sit up late often rise late also.

"For this once," said Jack, "I'll have a prime Dantzic Hotel breakfast. After this week, my room won't cost me anything, and I can begin to lay up money. I won't ride down town, though; except in the very worst kind of winter weather."

It delighted him to walk down that morning, and to know just where he was going and what work he had before him.

"I'm sure," he thought, "that I know every building, big and little, all the way along. I've been ordered out of

most of these stores. But I've found the place that I was looking for, at last."

The porters of Gifford & Company had the store open when Jack got there, and Mr. Gifford was just coming in.

"Ogden," he said, in his usual peremptory way, "put that press-work on the paper-bags right through, to-day."

"One moment, please, Mr. Gifford," said Jack.

"I've hardly a moment to spare," answered Mr. Gifford. "What is it?"

"A customer," said Jack; "the Hotel Dantzic. I can find more of the same kind, perhaps."

"Tell me," was the answer, with a look of greater interest, but also a look of incredulity.

Jack told him, shortly, the substance of his talk with Mr. Keifelheimer, and Mr. Gifford listened attentively.

"His steward and buyers have been robbing him, have they?" he remarked. "Well, he's right about it. No doubt we can save him from ten to twenty per cent. It's a good idea. I'll go up and see him, by and by. Now hurry with your printing!"

Jack turned to the waiting "Alligator," and Mr. Gifford went on to his desk.

"Jones," he said, to his head clerk, "Ogden has drummed us a good hotel customer," and then he told Mr. Jones about it.

"Mr. Gifford," said Mr. Jones, shrewdly, "can we afford to keep a sharp salesman and drummer behind that little printing-press?"

"Of course not," said Mr. Gifford. "Not after a week or so. But we must wait and see how he wears. He's very young, and a stranger."

"Young fellows soon grow," said Mr. Jones. "He'll grow. He'll pick up everything that comes along. I believe you'll find him a valuable salesman."

"Very likely," said Mr. Gifford, "but I sha'n't tell him so. He has plenty of confidence as it is."

"It's not impudence," said Mr. Jones. "If he hadn't been pushing—well, he wouldn't have found this place with us. It's energy."

"Yes," said Mr. Gifford; "if it was impudence we should waste no time with him. If there is anything I despise out and out, it's what is often called cheek."

Next, he hated laziness, or anything resembling it, and Jack sat behind the Alligator that day, working hard himself and taking note of how Mr. Gifford kept his employees busy.

"No wonder he didn't need another boy," he thought. "He gets all the work possible out of every one he employs. That's why he's so successful."

It was a long, dull, hot day. The luncheon came at noon; and the customers came all the time, but Jack was forbidden to meddle with them until his printing was done.

"Mr. Gifford's eyes are everywhere," said he, "but I hope he hasn't seen anything out of the way in me. There are bags enough to last a month—yes, two months. I'll begin on the circulars and cards to-morrow. I'm glad it's six o'clock."

Mr. Gifford was standing near the door, giving orders to the porters, and as the Alligator stopped, Jack said to him:

"I think I will go visiting among the other hotels, this evening."

"Very well," said Mr. Gifford quietly. "I saw Mr. Keifelheimer to-day, and made arrangements with him. If you're going out to the hotels in our interest, buy another hat, put on a stand-up collar with a new necktie; the rest of your clothing is well enough. Don't try to look dandyish, though."

"Of course not," said Jack, smiling; "but I was thinking about making some improvements in my suit."

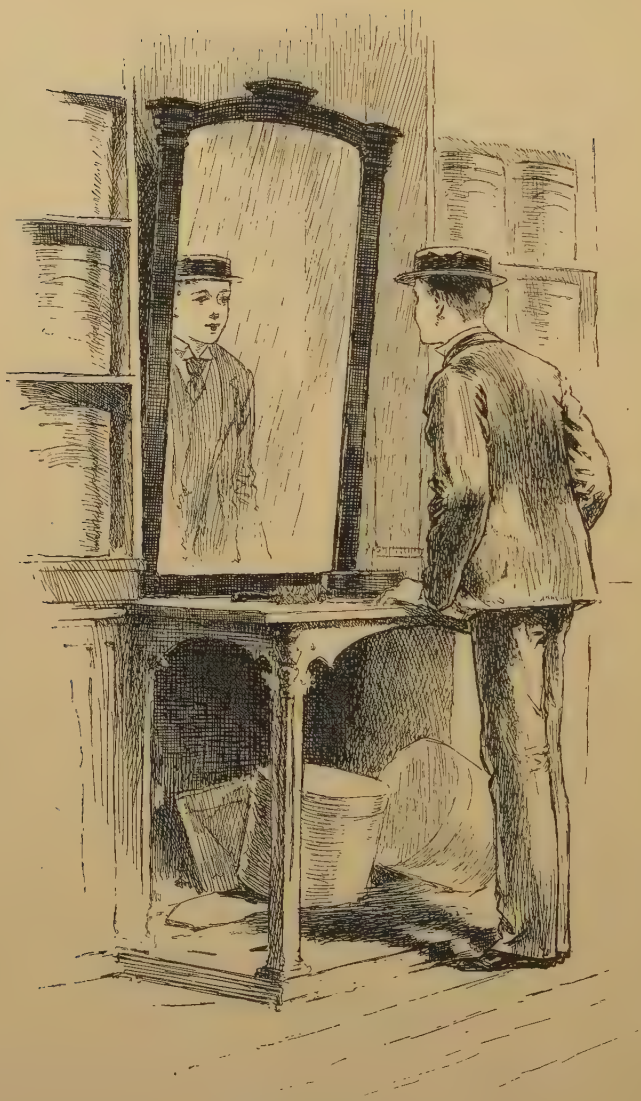
He made several purchases on his way up town, and put each article on as he bought it. The last "improvement" was a neat straw hat, from a lot that were selling cheaply, and he looked into a long looking glass to see what the effect was.

"There!" he exclaimed. There's very little of the 'green' left. It's not altogether the hat and the collar, either. Nor the necktie. Maybe some of it was starved out!"

He was a different looking boy, at all events, and the cashier at the desk of the Hotel Dantzic looked twice at him when he came in, and Mr. Keifelheimer remarked:

"Dot vas a smart boy! His boss vas here, und I haf safe money. Mr. Guilderaufenberg vas right about dot boy."

Jack was eager to begin his "drumming," but he ate a hearty supper before he went out.



Jack buys a new hat.

"I must learn something about hotels," he remarked thoughtfully. "I'll take a look at some of them."

The Hotel Dantzic was not small, but it was small compared to some of the larger hotels that Jack was now to investigate. He walked into the first one he found, and he looked about it, and then he walked out, and went into another and looked that over, and then he thought he would try another. He strolled around through the halls, and offices, and reading-rooms, and all the public places; but the more he saw, the more he wondered what good it would do him to study them.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when he stood in front of the office of the great Equatorial Hotel, feeling very keenly that he was still only a country boy, with very little knowledge of the men and things he saw around him.

A broad, heavy hand came down upon his shoulder, and a voice he had heard before asked, heartily:

"John Ogden? You here? Did'nt I tell you not to stay too long in the city?"

"Yes, you did, Governor," said Jack, turning quickly. "But I had to stay here. I've gone into the wholesale and retail grocery business."

Jack already knew that the Governor could laugh merrily, and that any other men who might happen to be standing by were more than likely to join with him in his mirth, but the color came at once to his cheeks when the Governor began to smile.

"In the grocery business?" laughed the Governor. "Do you supply the Equatorial?"

"No, not yet; but I'd like to," said Jack. "I think our house could give them what they need."

"Let me have your card then," said one of the gentlemen who had joined in the Governor's merriment; "for the Governor has no time to spare—"

Jack handed him the card of Gifford & Company.

"Take it Boulder, take it," said the Governor. "Mr. Ogden and I are old acquaintances."

"He's a protégé of yours, eh?" said Boulder. "Well, I mean business. Write your own name there, Mr. Ogden. I'll send our buyer down there, to-morrow, and we'll see what can be done. Shall we go in, Governor?"

Jack understood, at once, that Mr. Boulder was one of the proprietors of the Equatorial Hotel.

"I'm called for, Jack," said the Governor. "You will be in the city awhile, will you not? Well, don't stay here too long. I came here once, when I was about your age. I staid a year, and then I went away. A year in the city will be of great benefit to you, I hope. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Governor," said Jack, seriously. "We'll do the right thing by Mr. Boulder;" and there was another laugh as Jack shook hands with the Governor, and then with the very dignified manager of the Equatorial Hotel.

"That will do, for one evening," thought Jack, as the distinguished party of gentlemen walked away. "I'd better go right home and go to bed. The Governor's a brick anyhow!"

Back he went to the Hotel Dantzic, and he was soon asleep.

The Alligator press in Gifford & Company's was opening and shutting its black jaws regularly over the sheets of paper it was turning into circulars, about the middle of Wednesday forenoon, when a dapper gentleman with a rather prominent scarf-pin walked briskly into the store and up to the desk.

"Mr. Gifford?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"I'm Mr. Barnes," said the dapper man. "General buyer for the Equatorial Hotel. Your Mr. Ogden was up with us, last night, to see some of his friends, and I've come down to look at your price-list, and so forth."

"Oh!" quietly remarked Mr. Gifford, "our Mr. Ogden. Oh, quite right! I think we can satisfy you. We'll do our best, certainly. Mr. Jones, please confer with Mr. Barnes—I'll be back in a minute."

Up toward the door walked Mr. Gifford, but not too fast. He stood still when he arrived at the Alligator press.

"Ogden," he said, "you can leave that work. I've another printing hand coming."

Jack's heart beat quickly, for a moment. What,—could he be discharged so suddenly? He was dismayed. But Mr. Gifford went on:

"Wash your hands, Ogden, and stand behind the counter there. I'll see you again, by and by. The buyer is here from the Equatorial."

"I promised them you'd give them all they wanted, and

as good prices as could be had anywhere," said Jack, with a great sense of relief, and recovering his courage.

"We will," said Mr. Gifford, as he turned away, and he did not think he must explain to Jack that it would not do for Mr. Barnes to find Gifford & Company's salesman, "Mr. Ogden," running an Alligator press.

Mr. Barnes was in the store for some time, but Jack was not called up to talk with him. Mr. Gifford was the right man for that part of the affair, and in the course of his conversation with Mr. Barnes he learned further particulars concerning the intimacy between "your Mr. Ogden" and the Governor, with the addition that "Mr. Boulder thinks well of Mr. Ogden too."

Jack waited upon customers as they came, and he did well, for "a new hand." But he felt very ignorant of both articles and prices, and the first thing he said, when Mr. Gifford again came near him, was:

"Mr. Gifford, I ought to know more than I do about the stock and prices."

"Of course you ought," said Mr. Gifford. "I don't care to have you try any more 'drumming' till you do. You must stay a few months behind the counter and learn all you can. You must dress neatly, too. I wonder you've looked as well as you have. We'll make your salary fifteen dollars a week. You'll need more money as a salesman."

Jack flushed with pleasure, but a customer was at hand, and the interruption prevented him from making an answer.

"Jones," remarked Mr. Gifford to his head clerk, "Ogden is going to become a fine salesman!"

"I thought so," said Jones.

They both were confirmed in this opinion, about three weeks later. Jack was two hours behind time, one morning; but when he did come, he brought with him Mr. Guilderaufenberg of Washington, with reference to a whole winter's supplies for a "peeg poarding-house," and two United States Army contractors. Jack had convinced these gentlemen that they were paying too much for several articles that could be found on the list of Gifford & Company in better quality and at cheaper rates.

"Meester Giffort," said the German gentleman, "I haf drafel de vorlt over, und I haf nefer met a better boy dan dot Jack Ogden. He knows not mooch yet, alretty, but den he ees a very goot boy."

"We like him," said Mr. Gifford, smiling.

"So do I, und so does Mrs. Guilderaufenberg, und Miss Hildebrand, und Miss Podgr-ms-chski," said the German. "Some day you lets him visit us in Vashington? So?"

"I don't know. Perhaps I will," said Mr. Gifford; but he afterward remarked grimly to Mr. Jones: "If I should, and he should meet the President, Ogden would never let him go until he bought some of our tea and coffee!"

That day was a notable one in both Crofield and Mertonville. Jack's first long letter, telling that he was in the grocery business, had been almost a damper to the Ogden

family. They had kept alive a small hope that he would come back soon, until Aunt Melinda opened an envelope that morning and held up samples of paper bags, cards, and circulars of Gifford & Company, while Mrs. Ogden read the letter that came with them. Bob and Jim claimed the bags next, while Susie and Bessie read the circulars, and the tall blacksmith himself straightened up as if he had suddenly grown prouder.

"Mary!" he exclaimed. "Jack always said he'd get to the city. And he's there—and earning his living!"

"Yes, but—Father," she said, with a small shake in her voice, "I—wish he was back again. There'd be almost room for him to work in Crofield, now."

"Maybe so, maybe so," he replied. "There'll be crowds of people coming in when they begin work on the new rail way and the bridge. I signed the deeds yesterday for all the land they're buying of Jack and me. I won't tell him about it quite yet, though. I don't wish to unsettle his mind. Let him stay where he is."

"This will be a trying day for Mary," said Aunt Melinda, thoughtfully. "The Academy will open at nine o'clock. Just think of what that child has to go through! There'll be a crowd there, too,—oh, dear me!"

Mary Ogden sat upon the stage, by previous orders from the Academy principals, awaiting the opening exercises; but the principals themselves had not yet arrived. She looked rather pale, and she was intently watching the nickel-plated

gong on the table and the hands of the clock which hung upon the opposite wall.

"Perhaps the principals are here," Mary thought as the clock hands crept along. "But they said to strike the bell at nine, precisely, and if they're not here I must do it!"

At the second of time, up stood Mary and the gong sounded sharply.

That was for "Silence!" and it was very silent, all over the hall, and all the scholars looked at Mary and waited.

"Clang," went the gong again, and every boy and girl arose, as if they had been trained to it.

Poor Mary was thinking, "I hope nobody sees how scared I am!" but the Academy term was well opened, and Dr. Dillingham was speaking, when the Reverend Lysander Pettigrew and Mrs. Henderson, the tardy principals, came hurrying in to explain that an accident had delayed them.

CHAPTER XIX.

COMPLETE SUCCESS.

TWO years passed. There was a great change in the outward aspect of Crofield. The new bridge over the Cocahutchie was of iron, resting on stone piers, and the village street crossed it. The railroad bridge was just below, but was covered in with a shed, so that the trains might not frighten horses. The mill was still in its place, but the dam was two feet higher and the pond was wider. Between the mill and the bridge was a large building of brick and stone that looked like a factory. Between the street and the railway, the space was filled by the station-house and freight depot, which extended to Main Street; and there were more railway buildings on the other side of the Cocahutchie. Just below the railroad and along the bank of the creek, the ground was covered by wooden buildings, and there was a strong smell of leather and tan-bark. Of course, the old Washington Hotel was gone; but across the street, on the corner to the left, there was a great brick building, four stories high, with "Washington Hotel" painted across the

front of it. The stores in that building were just finished. Looking up Main Street, or looking down, it did not seem the same village. The new church in the middle of the green was built of stone; and both of the other churches were rapidly being demolished, as if new ones also were to take their places.

It was plain, at a glance, that if this improvement was general, the village must be extending its bounds rapidly, for there never had been too much room in it, for even the old buildings with which Jack had been familiar.

Jack Ogden had not been in Crofield while all this work was going on. His first week with Gifford & Company seemed the most exciting week that he had ever known, and the second was no less busy and interesting. He did not go to the German church the second Sunday, but later he did somehow drift into another place of worship where the sermon was preached in Welsh.

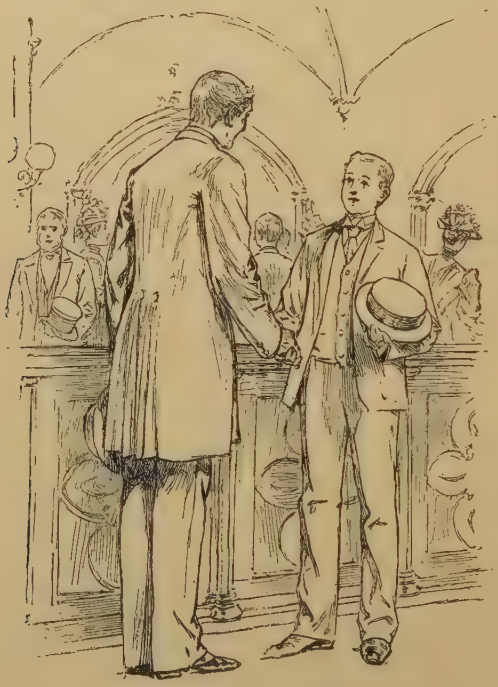
"Well!" said Jack, when he came out, at the close of the service, "I think I'll go back to the church I went to first. I don't look so green now as I did then, but I'm sure the General will remember me."

He carried out this determination the next Sunday. The sexton gave him a seat, and he took it, remarking to himself:

"A fellow feels more at home in a place where he's been before. There's the General! I wish I was in his pew. I'll speak to him when he comes out."

The great man appeared, in due season, and as he passed

down the aisle he came to a boy who was just leaving a pew. With a smile on his face, the boy held out his hand and bowed.



Jack speaks to the General.

"Good-morning," said the General, shaking hands promptly and bowing graciously in return. Then he added, "I hope you'll come here every Sunday."

That was all, but Jack received at least a bow, every Sunday, for four weeks. On the Monday after the fourth Sunday, the door of Gifford & Company's store was shadowed

by the entrance of a very proud-looking man who stalked straight on to the desk, where he was greeted cordially by Mr. Gifford, for he seemed to be an old friend.

"You have a boy here named John Ogden?" asked the General.

"Yes, General," said Mr. Gifford. "A fine young fellow."

"Is he doing well?" asked the General.

"We've no fault to find with him," was the answer. "Do you care to see him? He's out on business, just now."

"No, I don't care to see him," said the General. "Tell him, please, that I called. I feel interested in his progress, that's all. Good-morning, Mr. Gifford."

The head of the firm bowed the general out, and came back to say to Mr. Jones: "That youngster beats me! He can pick up a millionaire, or a governor, as easily as he can measure a pound of coffee."

"Some might think him rather bold," said Jones, "but I don't. He is absorbed in his work, and he puts it through. He's the kind of boy we want, no doubt of that."

"See what he's up to, this morning!" said Mr. Gifford. "It's all right. He asked leave, and I told him he might go."

Jack had missed seeing the General because he did not know enough of the grocery business. He had said to Mr. Gifford:

"I think, Mr. Gifford, I ought to know more about this business from its very beginnings. If you'll let me, I'd like to see where we get supplies."

That meant a toilsome round among the great sugar refineries, on the Long Island side of the East River; and then another among the tea and coffee merchants and brokers, away down town, looking at samples of all sorts and finding out how cargoes were unloaded from ships and were bought and sold among the dealers. He brought to the store, that afternoon, before six o'clock, about forty samples of all kinds of grocery goods, all labeled with prices and places, and he was going on to talk about them when Mr. Gifford stopped him.

"There, Ogden," he said. "I know all about these myself,—but where did you find that coffee? I want some. And this tea?—It is two cents lower than I'm paying. Jones, he's found just the tea you and I were talking of—" and so he went on carefully examining the other samples, and out of them all there were seven different articles that Gifford & Company bought largely next day.

"Jones," said Mr. Gifford, when he came back from buying them, "they had our card in each place, and told me, 'Your Mr. Ogden was in here yesterday. We took him for a boy at first.'—I'm beginning to think there are some things that only that kind of boy can do. I'll just let him go ahead in his own way."

Mary had told Jack all about her daily experiences in her letters to him, and he said to himself more than once:

"Dudley Edwards must be a tip-top fellow. It's good

of him to drive Mary over to Crofield and back every Saturday. And they have had such good sleighing all winter. I wish I could try some of it."

There was no going to Crofield for him. When Thanksgiving Day came, he could not afford it, and before the Christmas holidays Mr. Gifford told him:

"We can't spare you at Christmas, Ogden. It's the busiest time for us in the whole year."

Mr. Gifford was an exacting master, and he kept Jack at it all through the following spring and summer. Mary had a good rest during the hot weather, but Jack did not. One thing that seemed strange to her was that so many of the Crofield ladies called to see her, and that Miss Glidden was more and more inclined to suggest that Mary's election had been mainly due to her own influence in Mertonville.

On the other hand, it seemed to Jack that summer, as if everybody he knew was out of the city. Business kept pressing him harder and harder, and all the plans he made to get a leave of absence for that second year's Thanksgiving Day failed to work successfully.

The Christmas holidays came again, but throughout the week, Gifford & Company's store kept open until eight o'clock, every evening, with Jack Ogden behind the counter. He got so tired that he hardly cared about it when they raised his salary to twenty-five dollars a week, just after Mr. Gifford saw him come down town with another coffee and tea dealer, whose store was in the same street.

"We mustn't let him leave us, Jones," Mr. Gifford had

said to his head clerk. "I am going to send him to Washington next week."

Not many days later, Mrs. Guilderaufenberg in her home at Washington was told by her maid servant that, "There's a strange b'y below, ma'am, who sez he's a-wantin' to spake wid yez."

Down went the landlady into the parlor, and then up went her hands.

"Oh, Mr. Jack*og*den! How glad I am to see you! You haf come! I gif you the best stateroom in my house."

"I believe I'm here," said Jack, shaking hands heartily. "How is Mr. Guilderaufenberg and how is Miss—"

"Oh, Miss Hildebrand," she said, "she will be so glad, and so will Mrs. Smith. She avay with her husband. He is a Congressman from far vest. You will call to see her."

"Mrs. Smith?" exclaimed Jack, but in another second he understood it, and asked after his old friend with the unpronounceable name as well as after Miss Hildebrand.

"She has a name, now, that I can speak! I'm glad Smith isn't a Polish name," he said to himself.

"Oh, Mr. Jack*og*den!" exclaimed Mrs. Guilderaufenberg, a moment later. "How haf you learned to speak German? She will be so astonish!"

That was one use he had made of his evenings, and he had improved by speaking to all the Germans he had met down town; and his German was a great delight to Mr. Guilderaufenberg, and to Miss Hildebrand, and to Mrs. Smith (formerly Miss Pod——ski) when he called to see them.

"So!" said Mr. Guilderaufenberg, "you takes my advice and you comes. Dis ees de ceety! Ve shows you eet all ofer. All de beeg buildings and all de beeg men. You shtay mit Mrs. Guilderaufenberg and me till you sees all Vashington."

Jack did so, but he had business errands also, and he somehow managed to accomplish his commissions so that Mr. Gifford was quite satisfied when he returned to New York.

"I haven't sold so many goods," said Jack, "but then I've seen the city of Washington, and I've shaken hands with the President and with Senators and Congressmen Mr. Gifford, how soon can I make a visit to Crofield?"

"We'll arrange that as soon as warm weather comes," said his employer. "Make it your summer vacation."

Jack had to be satisfied. He knew that more was going on in the old village than had been told him in any of his letters from home. His father was a man who dreaded to write letters, and Mary and the rest of them were either too busy, or else did not know just what news would be most interesting to Jack.

"I'm going to see Crofield!" said he, a hundred times, after the days began to grow longer. "I want to see the trees and the grass, and I want to see corn growing and wheat harvesting. I'd even like to be stung by a bumblebee!"

He became so eager about it, at last, that he went home by rail all the way, in a night train, and he arrived at Cro-

field, over the new railroad, just as the sun was rising, one bright June morning.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed, as he walked out of the station. "It's not the same village! I won't go over to the house and wake the family until I've looked around."

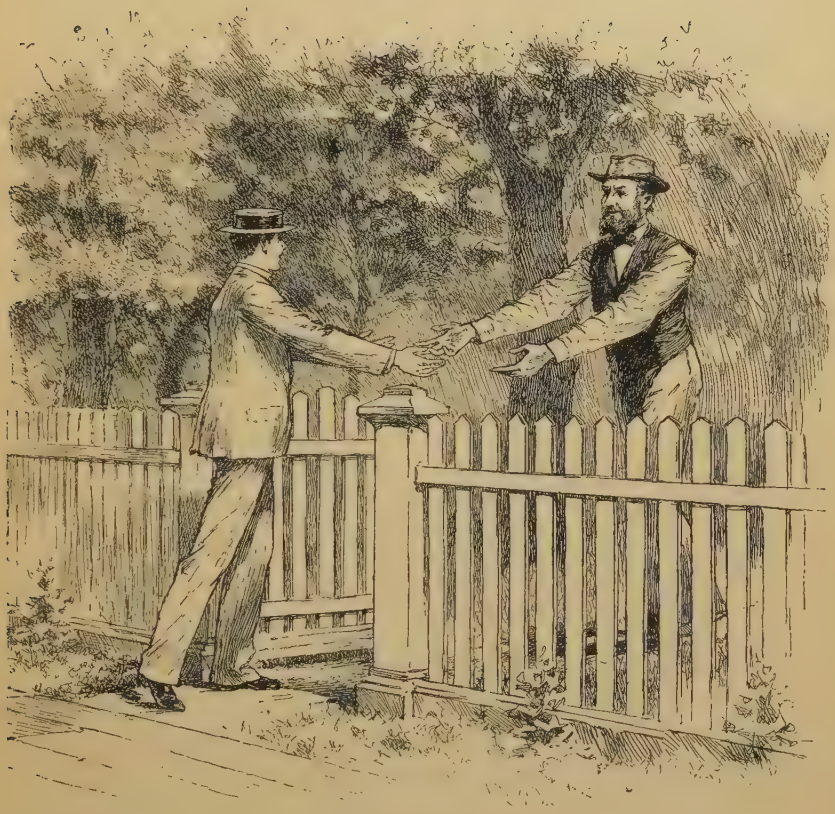
From where he stood, he gazed at the new hotel, and took a long look up and down Main Street. Then he walked eagerly down toward the bridge.

"Hullo!" he said in amazement. "Our house isn't there! Why, what is the meaning of this? I knew that the shop had been moved up to the back lot. They're building houses along the road across the Cocahutchie! Why haven't they written and told me of all this?"

He saw the bridge, the factory, the tannery, and many other buildings, but he did not see the familiar old blacksmith shop on the back lot.

"I don't know where we live nor where to find my home!" he said, almost dejectedly. "They know I'm coming, though, and they must have meant to surprise me. Mary's at home, too, for her vacation."

He walked up Main Street, leaving his baggage at the station. New—new—new,—all the buildings for several blocks, and then he came to houses that were just as they used to be. One pretty white house stood back among some trees, on a corner, and, as Jack walked nearer, a tall man in the door of it stepped quickly out to the gate. He seemed to be trying to say something, but all he did, for a moment, was to beckon with his hand.



Jack returns home.

"Father!" shouted Jack, as he sprang forward.

"Jack, my son, how are you?"

"Is this our house?" asked Jack.

"Yes, this is our house. They're all getting up early, too, because you're coming. There are some things I want to

talk about, though, before they know you're actually here. Walk along with me a little way."

On, back, down Main Street, walked Jack with his father, until they came to what was now labeled Bridge Street. When Jack lived in Crofield the road had no name.

"See that store on the corner?" asked Mr. Ogden. "It's a fine-looking store, isn't it?"

"Very," said Jack.

"Well, now," said his father, "I'm going to run that store, and I do wish you were to be in it with me."

"There will be none too much room in it for Bob and Jim," said Jack. "They're growing up, you know!"

"You listen to me," continued the tall blacksmith, trying to be calm. "The railway company paid me quite a snug sum of money for what they needed of your land and mine. Mr. Magruder did it for you. I bought with the money thirty acres of land, just across the Cocahutchie, to the left of the bridge. Half of it was yours to begin with, and now I've traded you the other half. Don't speak. Listen to me. Most of it was rocky, but the railway company opened a quarry on it, getting out their stone, and it's paying handsomely. Livermore has built that hotel block. I put in the stone and our old house lot, and I own the corner store, except that Livermore can use the upper stories for his hotel. The factory company traded me ten shares of their stock for part of your land on which they built. I traded that stock for ten acres of rocky land along the road,

across the Cocahutchie, up by the mill. That makes forty acres there."

"Father!" exclaimed Jack. "All it cost me was catching a runaway team, and your bill against the miller! Crofield is better than the grocery business in New York!"

"Listen!" said his father, smiling. "The tannery company traded me a lot of their stock for the rest of my back lot and for the rest of your gravel, and they tore down the blacksmith shop, and I traded their stock and some other things for the house where we live I made your part good to you, with the land across the creek, and that's where the new village of Crofield is to be."

"I didn't see a cent of money in any of those trades, but I've a thousand dollars laid up, and I'm only working in the railroad shop now, but I'm going into the hardware business. I wish you'd come back and come in with me. There's the store—rent free. We can sell plenty of tools, now that Crofield is booming!"

"I've saved up seven hundred and fifty dollars," said Jack, "from my salary and commissions. I'll put that in. Gifford & Company 'll send you things cheap. But, Father, —I belong in the city. I've seen hundreds of boys there who didn't belong there, but I do. Let's go back to the house. Bob and Jim—"

"Well, maybe you're right," said his father, slowly. "Come, let us go home. Your mother has hardly been able to wait to see you."

When they came in sight of the house, the stoop and the

front gate were thronged with home-folk, but Jack could not see clearly for a moment. The sunshine, or something else, got into his eyes. Then there were pairs of arms, large and small, embracing him, and,—well, it was a happy time, and Mary was there and his mother, and the family were all together once more.

"How you have grown!" said his aunt. "*How* you have grown!"

"I do wish you'd come home to stay!" exclaimed his mother.

"Perhaps he will," said his father, and Mary had hardly said a word till then, but now it seemed to burst out in spite of her.

"Oh Jack!" she said. "If I could go back with you, when you go! I could live with a sister of Mrs. Edwards. She's invited me to live with her for a whole year. And I could finish my education, and be really fit to teach. I've saved some money."

"Mary!" answered Jack, "I can pay all the other expenses. Do come!"

"Yes, you'd better go Jack," said his father, thoughtfully. "I am sure that you are a city boy."

That was a great vacation, but no trout were now to be caught in the Cocahutchie. The new store on the corner was to be opened in the autumn, and Jack insisted upon having it painted a bright red about the windows. There were visits to Mertonville, and there were endless talks about what Jack's land was going to be worth, some day. But

the days flew by, and soon his time was up and he had to go back to the city. He and Mary went together, and they went down the Hudson River in the steamer "Columbia."

Mr. Dudley Edwards, of Mertonville, went at the same time to attend to some law business, he said, in New York.

Jack told Mr. Gifford all about the Crofield town-lots, and his employer answered:

"That is the thing for you, Ogden; you'll have some capital, when you come of age, and then we can take you in as a junior partner. You belong in the city. I couldn't take you in any sooner, you know. We don't want a boy."

"That's just what you told me," said Jack roguishly, "the first time I came into this store; but you took me then. Well, I shall always do my best."

THE END.

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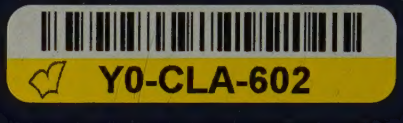
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